



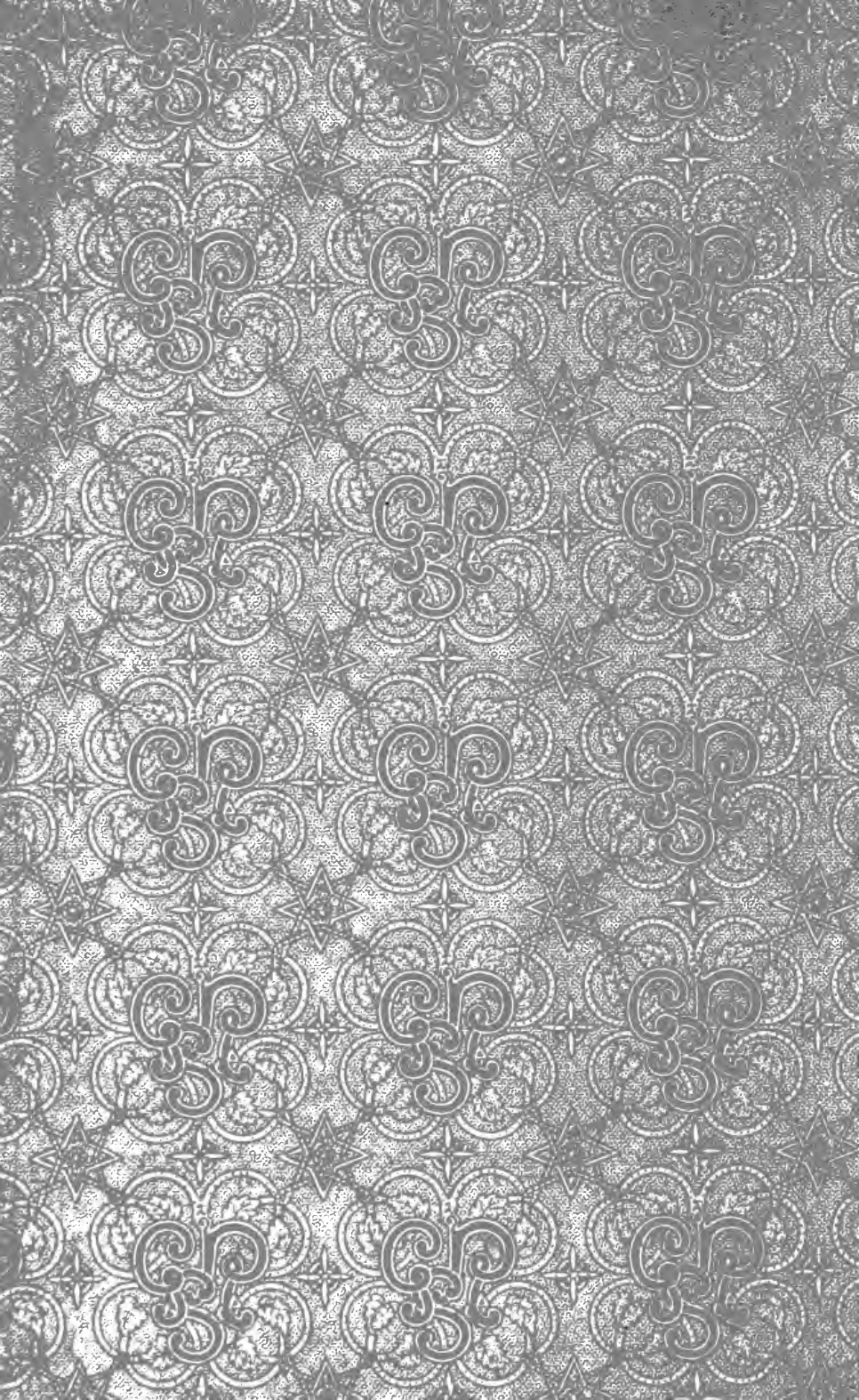


# HEROINES OF HISTORY

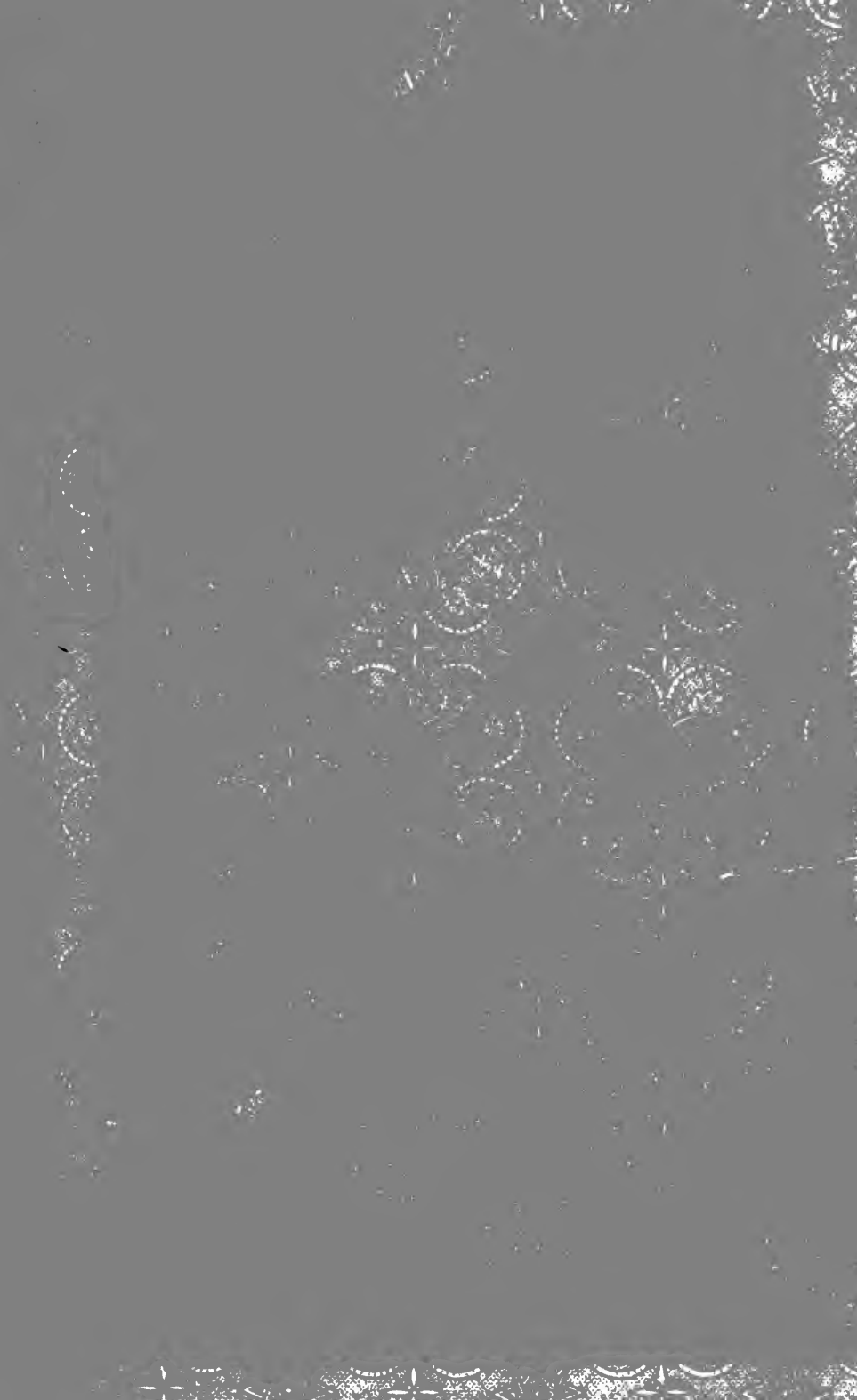
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Prix de français accordé  
à ma chère Mlle pour  
son application et les  
progrès.

G. Zöllner

19 juillet 1894.



75 p.

Owen







# THE HEROINES

OF

## HISTORY

BY  
MRS. OCTAVIUS FREIRE OWEN

AUTHOR OF  
"HEROINES OF DOMESTIC LIFE"

---

———"Oh! how much  
Those ladies are deceived and cheated, when  
The clearness and integrity of their actions  
Do not defend themselves and stand secure  
On their own bases.—MASSINGER.

---

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HEROINES OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

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## PREFACE.

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THE due appreciation of feminine influence in forming the character, is never denied to be a prominent feature of true statesmanship, nor that the decay of that influence, and the depreciation of woman, are unfailing signs of national fall or individual worthlessness. The time has passed when, in the darkness of barbarism, female sensibility or excellence was held in light estimation, and it is left only to meagre or perverted intellects, to satirize with Voltaire, the sex which, he held to possess neither of the masculine attributes, ideas, nor beards. Happily education now seconds the endowments of mind; the world concedes a tacit acquiescence to the claims of woman, for pre-eminence in many other powers besides that of simple endurance, and we leave to the Hottentots the singular custom of first proving their arrival at manhood, by beating their mothers. Indeed the high standard to which, history shows, womanly excellence may attain, and we may add in candour, the fearful power our sex can exercise, render the



duty of its biographer doubly difficult, in keeping the mean between the two extremes of passion and principle, so as to

—— “Nothing extenuate,  
Nor set down aught in malice.”

Admitting therefore the generally-allowed influence of woman, but restricting our observations to the one particular object of this work, Heroism, we remark that the latter, partaking largely of Fortitude, has ever been considered peculiarly a feminine quality, and that though biography, like a vast picture made up of a myriad varied faces, pleases one taste by some features, and another by those wholly opposite, yet the element of encouragement or reproof is in each; indeed, even where no sympathy appears, discrimination may discover beauties which, by the affections, convince the reason. Hence, too, it is the most profitable kind of history, because it presents the individual as influenced by and controlling circumstances, rather than exhibits these last in their dry detail; and the knowledge derived from it, is therefore of the greatest importance to the young, who copy character readily, and are often blinded to imperfection by the false lustre of ambition and glory.

Moreover, though the qualifications requisite for the historian who writes for youth, implying identity with its feelings of enthusiasm, even while moderating their



effects, enhance the difficulties of the present work arising from materials at once too much and too little known ; since also condensation, and the tendency to sacrifice reality to attractiveness—sometimes the most profitable characters being the least engaging,—further augment it, yet a pleasant task is that, of consecrating to posterity the sex's annals. The historian wanders through the garden of the Past, culls from each fairest plant the brightest tints, the richest odours, to stimulate the ambition or support the endurance of the young mothers of the future generation. Lastly, each truth is immortal ; the blossom that has faded in the tomb, leaves in the wreath of history, the germ of imperishable reproduction, either to adorn the humble porch of domestic life, or crown with amaranth the noble—perchance the regal—brow.

To instruct by attraction, has been my chief design in the following pages, but if I have failed in rendering all the subjects entertaining, it must be recollected that Heroism, in its very nature, infers circumstances of pain or difficulty ; like the gorgeous blossom, which, refusing to unfold itself to meridian glory, reserves for the cold hour of night, the display of its unique loveliness. Yet the shade enhances the outline : in ocean depths lies the delicate, the beautiful shell, which the waves in their passion cast at our feet, and thus though feminine Heroism appear



superficially hardened, by the warring contact with alternate elevation and depression, yet it has sheltered in the spiral caverns of its love, life which would otherwise have perished, interests which its fragile walls have yet borne triumphant through the elemental strife. Nor while we take warning by that misguided energy which, notwithstanding its vastness, appears

—— “An awful chaos—light and darkness—  
And wind and dust—and passions and pure thoughts,  
Mix'd, and contending without end or order ;  
All dormant or destructive :”

should yet the lowliest despair of imitating the courage, generosity, or fortitude developed in most of the “Heroines of History.” It is true that individuality is never restored, yet, “whatever man has done, man may do ;” by the use of identical muscles we “either climb or crawl,” and the same wings that we employ to bear us lightly through the grove, may, if properly exercised, carry us aloft into regions above the swallow’s flight, or the most dizzily-hung eyrie of the eagle !

E. O.

*Burstow Rectory,  
January, 1854.*



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# HEROINES OF HISTORY.

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## Jael, or Jabel.

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B.C. 1296.

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“BLESSED above women shall Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, be.” Do we ever reflect, in enumerating the ineffable blessings accruing to us from the gospel dispensation, that amongst them ranks the privilege of living in times when our faith is not likely to be tested by, nor our hope of heaven based upon, the performance of a duty at variance with every softer impulse of our woman’s nature? Fenced around by refinement, carefully guarded from aught that can assail the feminine character in these happy days, we are apt to regard those of our sex like Jael, and the parallel case of Judith, as possessing a wholly distinct temperament from our own; and to a certain extent we are right. Education and circumstances have operated to the last degree beneficially upon our existence, and perhaps the present age is one permitting the nearest



**approach** to actual perfection as regards civilization, **and** due esteem of those who are to become the mothers of the next (and perhaps still more enlightened) generation. Yet start not, gentle reader ; the heroic Israelite may have been endowed with a heart as tender, a mental organization as delicate, to which the very name of violence, or a deed of bloodshed, was as repellent as to your own, or to that of any other sensitively-nurtured daughter of our favoured land ! Let us gratefully acknowledge, therefore, the boon, that to us is intrusted the performance of religious duty, unfettered by persecution and untried by the ordeal of nature's most fearful conflict.

The history of Jael is brief : she is reported to have been the wife of Heber the Kenite, and scripture hints at the relationship of her family to Moses by Hobab, who doubtless, as well as his progeny, had derived many advantages by means of Israel : indeed Moses premises this in the words " We will surely do thee good." When Jabin, king of Canaan, intrusted Sisera, his captain of the host, with the campaign against Israel, the power of his army appears to have been very great, and for a long period his success ascertained ; since it is said that he possessed " nine hundred chariots of iron, and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel." At the request of Deborah the Prophetess, who then judged Israel,



Barak attended to receive the promise from God, of Sisera's overthrow ; but whether as a punishment of Barak's faithlessness, who refused to go without Deborah, or from some other reason of the Divine mind, the appointed commander of the Israelitish army was informed that the Lord should "sell Sisera into the hand of a woman." Whatever difficulty may exist in the minds of commentators as to the subsequent conduct of Jael, the words quoted appear to imply that the Lord would overrule her acts for good to his people, as upon another occasion he made Balaam's cupidity a vehicle for assuring the promise of Messiah to the world, and even converted the remorse of Judas into a method of vindicating the fulfilment of his word. Much allowance must be made for the obscurity which envelops the motives of Jael as well as the circumstances which attended the presence of Sisera in the tent, his conduct towards her, and the exasperation, probably, his tyranny excited in the hearts of all the Jews, a people ever brave and patriotic. No cause except one of these last appears of sufficient power to incite a woman of the East, notoriously proverbial for its strictness in maintaining hospitality, to exhibit what must otherwise be deemed one of the most flagrant proofs of treachery and malice. By way of apology, the Rabbis say that the words "at her feet he bowed, he fell," signify that he



offered violence to her, for which cause she put "her right hand to the workman's hammer;" but this seems very improbable in a man who was overpowered by sleep. Again, the difficulty is increased by the implied security of the food given by Jael to him, which is in the East of considerable importance. Taylor suggests, 1st, that Jael had felt herself the oppression of Israel by Sisera: 2nd, that she was moved by patriotism: 3rd, that the general character of Sisera was so bad, that his death was desirable at any rate. However this may be, certain it is, that the whole history is exactly parallel to that of Judith, in the anxiety it evinces to deliver the people, and the use of artifice to accomplish the desire.

It is safer, on the whole, in matters of this kind, to adhere simply to what is known, without endeavouring to wrest the actions of others to our own rule of conduct, when we know little of the circumstances of the former.

As the narrative appears shorn of all explanatory relations, it strikes us with horror that blood should be spilt by treachery, be the victim ever so hated or the motive ever so strong: indeed it is an anomaly to say, as many do, that a bad action can spring from a good motive, for the turpitude of the former casts back a reflective stain upon the latter. A person may moreover be spoken of as "blessed," in reference to the



*results* of a certain action, and not as to its inherent goodness ; but knowing that God abhors a lie, and that he desires truth “ in the inward parts,” it is sufficient for us, “ not to seek to be wise beyond what we are able,” in cases which, like the present, are so stated, as to render heroism doubtful, by the very questionable incidents which surround it. The history is given at full in the fourth and fifth chapters of Judges, so that to repeat it here would be superfluous in the absence of other materials. The events occurred between B.C. 1316 and B.C. 1296.



## Judith.

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Epoch doubtful.

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HEROISM, as indeed many, if not most, of the human virtues, carries so much of our natural baseness within it, that, like the tub of Diogenes, "it will not bear too close inspection:" hence, whilst the tendency of our admiration is to exaggerate actions, we pass over their evil, in our absorbed gaze upon their good, and, riveting our attention upon the head of gold, grow oblivious of the feet of mire and clay. Yet human conduct in this resembles Nebuchadnezzar's image, for however bright the action may appear, it rests but too often upon the extremities of earthly motives and degrading passions; and great characters, gleaming like lights in the dark mists of a sinful world, cause us to pass over the gloom of the latter, forgetful that their very radiance draws augmented glory from the shadow: or, in disappointment at the rarity of noble examples in actual life, we seek to supply the deficiency from the regions of the fabulous and the forced pencillings of imagination; so that we deprive the lesson of existence of its due moral upon the heart,



and rob incident of its proper force, by enveloping it in the mazes of doubt and suspicion. These observations will apply to the history of Judith.

Belonging to the tribe of Reuben, the daughter of Merari, and widow of Manasseh, Judith is almost as much celebrated for her beauty as for the deliverance of Bethulia when besieged by Holofernes. She had been told that Ozias, the general, had promised to deliver the town within five days into the hands of Holofernes; for which reason she sent for Chabris and Carmis, elders of the people, and informed them of her purpose to free her country, without, however, revealing the means by which she would effect it. Commending herself then with especial fervour to the Almighty protection, with what we must consider a strange self-deception, and ignorance of that frame of mind and line of conduct which God vouchsafes alone to bless, she dressed herself with the greatest care in her richest apparel, and under the erroneous idea that she might "do evil that good might come," went to the general's camp, and prostrated herself before Holofernes, pretending that she fled from the city.

It must be remembered, that not only is the story apocryphal, but, as will be observed presently, doubts are gravely entertained, and with reason, of its authenticity altogether. The whole tissue of it, indeed, shows the wisdom of the Church in being very guarded



as to the admission of such questionable records into the canon of scripture, seeing that this indeed can hardly plead the only object for which the 6th Article (quoting Jerome) commends them at all; viz. for "example of life and instruction of manners." Still, inasmuch as heroism may be defined, an exemplification of stern self-sacrifice, by risk or suffering, for an elevated purpose, we allow Judith's name to be placed within the record of famous women.

As soon as Holofernes beheld her, he, captivated by her address and appearance, promised her protection, with free ingress and egress of the camp. Upon the fourth day, he sent Bagoas to invite her to a superb entertainment, whither his fair captive went, adorned with every resource that could rivet the admiration of the ruler, already subdued by the graces of her first impression. Like all barbarian soldiers, he protracted the hours of the feast far into the night, until, oppressed by wine and revelling, he sunk overpowered by stupor, an easy victim to the machinations of his treacherous guest. No sooner was he asleep, than, placing her maid upon the watch to prevent surprise, Judith, still preserving the hypocrisy of religious zeal, we are told, prayed to God, took down the resting warrior's sword, and cut off his head, which having given to her maid, she wrapped the body in the curtains of the bed, and using the liberty she enjoyed











of passing the lines unquestioned, went to Bethulia. By dawn the next day the head was exhibited upon the city walls, an event which so appalled the besiegers, that they fled in dismay ; and to reward the infamy of her act, in which it appears she found willing accomplices even among the priests of her nation, we are told that the high-priest Jehoiakim came from Jerusalem to Bethulia, and complimented Judith. She also received all the property of the murdered soldier, which afterwards, by a continuation of moral ignorance, equally absurd as reprehensible, was consecrated to the service of the Lord. The reward of the traitress Tarpeia would have been much more befitting such conduct, who was pressed to death by the weight of the gold ornaments for the sake of which she had delivered up the city. Judith, however, is reported to have lived 105 years at Bethulia, to have enfranchised her maid, and after her death, to have been lamented seven days by her nation, who placed the day of the victory amongst the number of Hebrew festivals.

It is a great satisfaction to know that not only almost insuperable difficulty prevails as to the time of the history, but that such a tissue of false virtue may be regarded as little better than fabrication. The Greek and Syriac put the history after the captivity of Babylon, but the Vulgate seems to refer to a time



before that event. Those who think the latter, and place it in Manasseh's era, suppose that Nabuchodonosor is the Saosduchinus of Ptolemy, and Arphaxad the Phraortes of Herodotus, and that these, making war upon each other, and Arphaxad being conquered, Saosduchinus was sent by Holofernes to reduce the opposing nations. If again Judith be placed after the Babylonish captivity, this opinion is founded upon the authority of the Greek copy, which is very ancient. Nevertheless, all historians are at variance about it, for Eusebius reckons it in the reign of Cambyses, Syncellus in that of Xerxes, Sulpitius Severus in that of Ochus; others, under Antiochus Epiphanes, and contemporaneous with the Maccabees; this last being also the opinion of Calmet. Further to reduce this "strange, eventful," but not very commendable history, to the more proper element of fiction than of fact, Grotius regards it only as a parable, and Prideaux, with whom, from dislike of its concomitants, we would gladly coincide, abandons its authenticity in sheer despair at the difficulties it involves.



## Salamona.

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B.C. 167.

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ONE of the most glorious examples of the effect of true faith, alluded to by St. Paul in his eleventh chapter to the Hebrews, seems to point to the wonderful constancy with which the family of the seven children of Salamona and their parent, "out of weakness were made strong," "were tortured, not accepting deliverance," and thus "obtained a good report." In fact, the impotence of all worldly ties to alienate the steadfast hold these eminent Jewish worthies maintained upon the promises of God, completely proves the presence not of religious fanaticism, but of abiding spiritual knowledge; for the former is chiefly the offspring, or at all events the associate, of the will, so that when we are prompted to endure "a great fight of afflictions," from which nature of itself revolts, we must look for support to the highest source of knowledge and comfort, totally subversive of infatuation.

Antiochus Epiphanes, "the Illustrious," or, as he was more truly though sarcastically termed, from his



outrageous violence, "Epimanes," the "Madman," having spoiled the temple of Jerusalem, proceeded to abrogate to the utmost of his power the Divine law, forbidding the Jews to observe their usual laws and ceremonies, and taking delight as far as possible in driving them to idolatry. Perceiving, however, that his edicts could not compel the Hebrews to forsake their religion, but that they preferred death to dishonouring their holy law, he commanded swine's flesh to be sacrificed upon the altar, and to be offered to every Hebrew to eat. Eleazar, an aged priest celebrated for his virtue, being urged by the king thus to transgress the Mosaic ritual, resolutely refused, and though subjected to most cruel scourgings, and at length to the violence of fire, died in inflexible maintenance of that example, which others, with all the inducements of youth to cling to life, were yet prepared to copy. Exasperated at the resolution of this pious patriarch, Antiochus sent to the castle of Sosandrum for seven children, with their mother, to be brought, thinking that, from their tenderness of age and education, he should find less opposition to his decree. Salamona, the mother, was now advanced in years, and is represented to have been "descended of most virtuous and noble parentage, and so she herself had continued and lived; but that excellent feature of body, enriched with nobility of blood and dignity, was



now also made more noble by virtue and fortitude, wherein she passed all other things that could be said in her commendations." Mingling craft with cruelty, Antiochus at first endeavoured to persuade her children to submission, by representing a plausible desire for their benefit; but soon turned to those means his disposition most affected, and caused "horrible devices of torments to be shown to them." Nothing astonishes the worldly and irreligious so much as the evidence of the secret supplies of strength vouchsafed to the believer; the misfortune is, that such evidence irritates rather than converts. And thus having successively executed, in every variety of artful anguish, the seven brethren, and received from them all undiminished testimony of the firmness of their faith, the furnace of his wrath might be truly said to have been "heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated," and he directed its accumulated vehemence against the human source of such unflinching constancy, Salamona herself.

The account given of her, though couched in the language of pious fervour and holy admiration by the historian, can add nothing to the inherent simple grandeur of her heroism, nor gild that refined gold apparent in her whole behaviour. The death of her children "evoked from herself a godly zeal," and she, in scorn of the threats of Antiochus, appears to have



thought that the bitterness of death was past, now that her children were no more. She, it is said, "with an adamant sense, stouter than the never-yielding rocks, did neither forsake her children in their torments nor in their death, but in a manner compelled them to perish, and never sorrowed thereat." "Considering Eleazar's martyrdom, she exhorted her most dear and loving children to hasten to that agony wherein we may be a credit to our nation, and gain of God an everlasting reward." "Believe me," she added, "we are rather tried than tormented; for whatsoever this world affords is mortal and like a shadow."

"Kneeling down in the place of torment, she besought of God an end of this life, protesting that she had not for love of life so long deferred to die, but only for her children's sake, and that now she had seen them all seven triumphing." The fury of Antiochus now waxed hot, and he commanded this worthy mother to be tormented, who was, as the tyrant willed, stripped and hung up by the hands and most cruelly scourged. "In addition to this, after her body had been lacerated, she was placed in a red-hot frying-pan; "being most willing to follow her children's steps in torment, and lifting up her eyes and hands to heaven, she prayed, and so yielded her ~~chaste~~ <sup>chaste</sup> soul to God." Josephus adds, that "Antiochus



was stricken with fire from heaven ;" he is reported, however, to have afterwards warred against the Persians, and to have perished in the most horrible manner. With the usual arrangement of Divine Providence, his cruelty tended to the illustration of faith ; and although no bright and glowing panegyric of human eloquence seeks to illustrate the greatness of his victim's virtue, yet this "plain unvarnished tale" of martyrdom may challenge comparison with the grandest epoch of Roman fortitude, and surpasses it in the elevation of principle which gave it power.



## Mariamne,

WIFE OF HEROD THE GREAT.

---

B.C. 29.

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HISTORY, in many instances, affords only the strong lines of character as marked by some extraordinary incidents in the existence of the individual, but leaves the experienced observer of human life to fill up the intermediate spaces with colours drawn from his own mind. Hence, we ought to view the representation given to us by the original draught with much allowance, from the paucity of details, and not unfrequently from the inequality of the traits as exhibited through the medium of the historian's conception; for the truest narrative, if uninspired, is not the single unmixed ray falling from the primary light of fact, but the scintillation of the latter combined with the hue of the transmitting lens. In the life before us this is especially the case; for the cantiness of the record, and its strongly-marked delineation, make us aware of the excellent qualities and powerful impulses which have been lost, through the lapse of time, in the portraiture of Mariamne, who yet has esta-



blished an undoubted claim to heroism. We find, also, that the latter has been justly attributed by mankind no less to the fortitude of suffering than to the energy of act, and that she has been thereby placed high in the niche of fame, who, debarred by a jealous tyrant from exemplifying her constitutional gentleness as a wife, earned an imperishable glory by the majesty of her endurance as a martyr.

Herod "the Great" (the latter title often an antithesis, as here, to "good") was the second son of Antipater, by whom he was made governor of Galilee, and after the battle of Philippi, was preferred by Antony to the tetrarchy of Judea in conjunction with his brother Phasael. Upon being opposed by Antigonus in his sovereignty, he had to fly from his potent rival, with Cyprus his mother, Salome his sister, his betrothed bride Mariamne also, and her mother Alexandra, sharing the fortunes of one who seemed born to visit with misery every one attached to him. Having left them in the strong fortress of Massada, he departed to Rome, whence, confirmed in his kingdom by Octavius and Marc Antony, he received such powerful assistance as enabled him with the Roman forces to defeat Antigonus, and finally to take Jerusalem.

During this period of strife and anxiety, as if in foreshadow of her future fate, the marriage of



Mariamne took place; and truly ever after for her the tips of Cupid's arrows were poisoned with the crimson of Bellona. Her very family connection with the Asmonean race, a line of heroes whose transcendant deeds riveted the Jewish love which national consanguinity attracted, rendered her position painful as that of a witness of the cruel jealousy towards their great name excited in her husband's mind, conscious of unjust usurpation. She was the daughter of Alexander, the son of King Aristobulus, and grand-daughter of Hyrcanus the high-priest, and, from all accounts, exhibited in the highest perfection the personal beauty of that ancient lineage, together with individual capacities of the rarest order. Indeed, it was her misfortune to possess the fatal dower of loveliness and talent; for, united to one so selfish as Herod, whose evil genius drew a margin of blood around him, in which he stood the presiding demon of the scene, the most trivial word, the expression of the unsophisticated heart, was construed into ill, according to the distorted construction of slander or distrust; for

"Trifles light as air  
Are to the jealous confirmation strong  
As proofs of holy writ."

Violent in his emotions, and with a temperament affecting more the turbulence of the tempest than the



serenity of an equable sphere, Herod idolized his wife with the selfish impetuosity of passion, impulsive though not evanescent, and from their earliest union rendered her existence a scene of variable emotions, concentrating always into pain. Her brother Aristobulus, described by Josephus as "wonderfully beautiful," was the first to feel the fickleness of fate when associated with the patronage of a tyrant. He had been raised to the priesthood when only seventeen years old, and appearing before the populace apparelled in the ornaments of his office, so reminded them, by his majestic deportment, of their favourite prince, his namesake and grandfather, that "they broke out by little and little into happy acclamations, mixed with wishes and prayers, and manifestly (although too hastily in such a kingdom) declared what evils they generally endured." Upon his retirement, therefore, to the baths upon a subsequent occasion, "being persuaded to swim, by Herod, certain of the latter's confederates (deputed to execute the murder), under pretence of sport ducked him repeatedly in the water, and never gave over until such time as they had stifled him."

Hypocrisy and deceit are twin sisters to jealousy, and though unmoved by repentance, the criminal pays an involuntary tribute to virtue by counterfeiting sorrow at transgression. Herod disclaimed



all participation in the murder, and laboured to persuade the world that it occurred without his connivance. It was no wonder, therefore, that, as we read, Mariamne hated him as much as he loved her; and having a just cause and colour of discontent, and, moreover, emboldened by the love which he bore her, she every day upbraided him with "what he had done to her brother."

This crime brought results which, by revealing the selfish suspicion of Herod's nature, even in his love to Mariamne, widened the breach so extensively as to give ample opportunity for Salome (her inveterate enemy, on account of Mariamne slighting her for her obscure birth) to eventually compass her destruction. Cleopatra, who had long been desirous of obtaining the kingdoms of Judea and Arabia from Antony, caused the latter to summon Herod to his presence, to explain the circumstances of the death of Aristobulus. Reluctant, yet compelled to go, Herod left Mariamne in the care of his uncle Joseph, with secret instructions to destroy her in case of his ill success with Antony; "for he loved her so extremely, by reason of her beauty, that he supposed himself injured if, after his decease, she should be beloved by any other; and he openly declared that all that misery that befel him proceeded from Antony's passion and entire affection



and admiration of her beauty, whereof he had before-time heard some report." Unfortunately, Joseph, in his eagerness to establish the opinion of Herod's affection towards her in the mind of Mariamne, revealed the secret instructions given to him, in order to prove how impossible it was for Herod to live without her. Upon the king's arrival, Salome, ever upon the alert to compass the destruction of Mariamne, falsely impeached her fidelity to Herod, who, though he repudiated the charge immediately upon the denial of it by his wife, yet, discovering that Joseph had revealed to her his secret purpose, commanded that he should be slain without audience or justification.

It might easily be conceived that, even in that iron age, feminine delicacy would naturally revolt at the long spectacle of successive crimes the rule of a despot exhibited; and though Alexandra, the mother of Mariamne, appears to have practised insidiously in endeavouring to bring about a change, yet, regarding Herod justly as the "very scourge" of her family, she solicited Hyrcanus, her father, to combine with Malchus, governor of Arabia, against him. Women, however, are naturally too impatient when wronged not to discover their own designs; but whether this or any other more obscure cause led to the frustration of her wishes, Herod visited the crime with his usual severity, and upon an innocent party (as Hyrcanus



is generally believed to be), with the common recklessness of passion. Hyrcanus, the last male of the Asmonean family, was destroyed by him, when upwards of eighty years old, though throughout that period he had ever been remarkable for placid virtue, and had manifested no sign of ambition even when he had the royal government in his hands.

These wretched concomitants of domestic misery and discord, instead of blunting the gentle nature of Mariamne, appear to have rendered her sensibility of her husband's wickedness more acute. Neither can we fail to remark a similarity often existent in the circumstances by which crime is committed, as in the motives by which it is induced; in that experience affords no warning to the victim, and the futility of vindictive punishment no better feeling to the oppressor. Joseph had paid the penalty of benevolent but imprudent garrulity, and his example, we should suppose, would have prevented a repetition of the same fault in others; yet, upon the occasion of Herod, after the battle of Actium, confiding his wife to Schemus,—who was charged with the same fatal purpose as in the former case, namely, to put her to death if Herod failed in obtaining the patronage of Augustus, whom he went to propitiate,—the minister revealed again the king's command, and purchased thereby his own destruction.



His fall, however, involved that of the queen herself, whose death was eventually brought about by a complication of treachery and malice which even history, that record of human vice, happily but seldom discloses. The following is an abbreviated description of the iniquity practised towards her, as translated from the historian Josephus, who therein develops the characteristics of the heroine, even to the failings which in some degree accelerated her ruin, as well as the magnanimity with which she met death, rendered doubly intense in its bitterness by the shameful baseness of a mother.

Having succeeded, and it must in candour be acknowledged, by his own noble avowal of his friendship for Antony, free from all servile adulation to Augustus, yet thereby confirming the latter's confidence in his proffer of future devotion, Herod (as the historian proceeds to say), "upon his arrival, found that fortune which was favourable unto him abroad, too forward at home, especially in regard of his wife, in whose affection before this time he seemed to be most happy. She was both chaste and faithful to him, yet had she a certain womanly imperfection and natural frowardness, which was the cause that she presumed too much upon the entire affection wherewith her husband was entangled, so that without regard of his person, who had power and authority over others, she

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entertained him oftentimes very outrageously ; all which he endured patiently without any show of discontent. But Mariamne upbraided and publicly reproached both the king's mother and sister, telling them that they were but abjectly and basely born."

" Whereupon there grew a great enmity and unrecoverable hatred between the ladies, and from thence, also, there arose an occasion of greater accusations and calumniation than before. These suspicions were nourished amongst them for the space of one whole year after Herod's return from Cæsar, and finally this long-contrived and fore-imagined hatred at last broke out violently upon this occasion that ensueth." The king, upon a certain day, having desired Mariamne's company, " she upbraided him bitterly with her father's and brother's death." The king took these reproachful words in very evil part, and was almost ready to strike her ; but his sister hearing a greater stir and noise within than was usual, sent in the butler, whom long before that time she had suborned, whom she commanded to tell the king that Mariamne had prepared a drink for him, " willing him that he should certify the king that Mariamne, having prepared a poison for his grace, had dealt with him to deliver it to his majesty. He then (being in this manner beforehand instructed what he ought to do), at that very instant, was sent to discover his treachery to the



king, and prosecuted his discourse, alleging that the potion was a certain medicine which Mariamne had given him, the virtue of which he knew not, which he had received according as he had told him, knowing that it concerned both his own security and the king's safety."

" Herod, before this highly displeased, hearing these words, was so much the more incensed ; for which cause he presently commanded Mariamne's most faithful servant to be examined by torments as concerning the poison, supposing that it was impossible for her to undertake anything whatsoever without his privity. He being tried and tormented after this cruel manner, confessed nothing of that for which he was tortured ; but declared to the king that the hatred which his wife had conceived against him proceeded from certain words that Sohemus had told her, for which cause he presently commanded his ministers to lay hands on Sohemus, and to put him to death. As for his wife, he drew her to her trial, and to this effect he assembled his most familiar friends, before whom he began to accuse her with great spite and spleen, as touching these potions and poisons aforesaid ; wherein he used intemperate and unseemly speeches, and such as for their bitterness did ill become him in the cause of justice : so that in the end the assistants, seeing the butt and bent of his desire, pronounced



sentence of death against her ; which being passed, both he and all other the assistants were of this opinion, that she should not so speedily be executed, but that she should be kept close prisoner in some sure place of the palace. But, by Salome's solicitations, Herod was incited to hasten her death, for that she alleged that the king ought to fear lest some sedition should be raised amongst the people, if he should keep her alive in prison. And by this means Mariamne was led unto her death."

We continue the scene of her last suffering in the words of the historian, whose simple quaintness, even in translation, conveys a more vividly impressive, because dispassionate conception of the parent's turpitude and the child's magnanimity, than the most glowing passages of invective or panegyric. "Alexandra," he says, "her mother, considering the estate of the time, and fearing no less mischief from Herod's hands than her daughter was assured of, she unbecomingly changed her mind, and abjectedly laid aside her former courage and magnanimity. For intending to make it known that she was neither party nor privy to those crimes wherewith Mariamne was charged, she went out to meet her daughter, and entertained her injuriously, protesting publicly that she was a wicked woman, and ungrateful towards her husband, and that she well deserved the punishment that was adjudged



her, for that she durst be so bold to attempt so heinous a fact, neglecting to requite her husband's entire love with her unfeigned loyalty. Whilst thus dishonestly she counterfeited her displeasure, and was ready to pull Mariamne by the hair, the assistants, according to her desert, condemned her generally for her shameful hypocrisy ; but she that was led to be punished convicted her by her mild behaviour. For first of all she gave her no answer, neither was any ways altered by her reproaches, neither would so much as cast her eye upon her, making it appear that she discreetly concealed and covered her mother's imperfections, and was aggrieved that she had so openly showed so great indignity, expressing for her own part a constant behaviour, and going to her death without a change of colour, so that those that beheld her perceived in her a kind of manifest courage and nobility even in her utmost extremity. Thus died Mariamne, having been a woman that excelled both in continence and courage, notwithstanding that she defaulted somewhat in affability and impatience of nature ; for the rest of her parts she was of an admirable and pleasing beauty, and of such a carriage in those companies wherein she was entertained, that it was impossible to express the same, in that she surpassed all those of her time, which was the principal cause that she lived not graciously and contentedly with the king. For being entertained



by him who entirely loved her, and from whom she received nothing that might discontent her, she presumed upon a great and intemperate liberty in her discourse. She digested, also, the loss of her friends very hardly, according as in open terms she made it known to the king; whereby also it came to pass, that both Herod's mother and sister, and likewise himself, grew at odds with her; and in especial her husband, from whom only she expected no hard measure." Her death occurred A.C. 29.

It is hardly possible to condense the numerous lessons of moral instruction conveyed by the preceding sketch of human greatness and deformity; the spectacle of tyranny on one hand engendering servile and unnatural cowardice, as in the instance of Alexandra; and on the other, evolving sublime devotion to duty as evidenced by Mariamne. The same gale that nips up the puny and degenerate, develops the courage and hardiness of the strong; and as in the physical, so is it with the moral being. Moreover, with whatever pretext Josephus may seek to extenuate the guilt of Herod, the innocence of his victim soon awoke a fearful avenger in the breast of the cruel king. Guilt forges its own fetters, and the consciousness of his crime for ever haunted him with the ceaseless scourge of remorse, until, at last, he gave over the charge and administration of his king-



dom ; meanwhile, a dreadful pestilence having afflicted his people, and a most agonizing disease, which defied all remedy, attacking himself, both were attributed to the vengeance of Heaven for the unjust death of the queen.

The measure of his crimes, however, was not completed until he had destroyed both his sons by his deceased wife, Aristobulus and Alexander, whom, by the machinations of Salome, his brother Pheroras, and Antipater his eldest son, by Doris, he secretly strangled, A.C. 5. The two accomplices, Pheroras and Antipater, afterwards perished miserably, having been discovered in a plot against Herod ; and to mark the judgment of Heaven upon vice even in this world, Alexandra was subsequently put to death, and Herod himself died in such a horrid manner “ as to cause a general opinion amongst holy men,” says Josephus, “ and such as had the knowledge of prophecy, that the king was thus punished for his infinite impieties and sins committed against the majesty of God.”







SEMIRAMIS.







## Semiramis,

QUEEN OF ASSYRIA.

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B.C. 1215. (?)

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ALTHOUGH the empire of Assyria was one of the most extensive and powerful of the ancient dynasties, its records have been so involved in obscurity, until the recent discoveries by Mr. Layard, as to render it extremely difficult to separate, in the accounts of its distinguished kings, truth from fable. Indeed, it is the peculiarity of all nations in their infancy to be infected by so great a love for the marvellous as to overlay even accounts which originally appear to have been accurately given, with the exaggeration of their own fancy. Nevertheless, we must always remember, that though the history may be fabulous in its details, it may still contain certain unquestionable facts; and these, as far as they can be ascertained, we shall endeavour to follow with respect to the account of Semiramis.

This, " the earliest female sovereign upon record,



who ever held undivided empire," was born at Ascalon under circumstances of some mystery ; for she is reported to have been descended from the celebrated Syrian goddess Derceto, who, persecuted by Venus, was driven to expose her child, and to throw herself into a lake, where she was immediately transformed into a fish. The infant, it is said, was fed by a flock of doves with milk, the birds sheltering it with their wings ; and when it grew stronger, the king's shepherd, Simma, having watched them carry cheese to a particular spot, discovered the child, and adopted her under the name of Semiramis, which signifies " doves," or " pigeons." Tradition states that her beauty was only equalled by her talents, and that Menon, one of the Assyrian monarch's principal officers, having seen her at the house of Simma, whither he had come to inspect the flocks, took her to Nineveh, and married her, and that she ever afterwards directed her husband's councils by her own sagacity.

Insecurity constitutes one great evil incident to despotism, and the happiness of no subject can be assured under the rule of an irresponsible monarch. Hence when Ninus the king besieged Bactria, Semiramis visited her husband's tent, and there gave such free and courageous advice with respect to attacking the citadel, as to attract the admiration of the sovereign. She even caused him to appoint her to the











command of a picked division, with which she seized the citadel, and enabled the Assyrians to enter.

The result of her courage proved fatal to her husband ; for the king, unrestrained by gratitude or duty, endeavoured to deprive Menon of his wife ; and when the former, persecuted by the king's cruelty, committed suicide, Semiramis became the wife of Ninus, who did not, however, long survive this act of perfidy. It has been recorded by some authorities, that Ninus, completely enthralled by his young wife's fascinations, granted to her entreaties the absolute sovereignty of his kingdom for twelve hours. This authority she made, to his horror, instant use of, by commanding him to be imprisoned, and then strangled, declaring herself his successor ; and although it has been said that her son Ninyas was associated with her in the royal power, she managed to exercise arbitrary sway during the whole of her life. This unscrupulous act, whilst it evinces the vastness of her ambition, is opposed in some degree to the fact that she paid her husband extraordinary honours after death, and placed over him a mound of earth nine stadia in height and ten in breadth, which continued for many ages.

But the greatest of her achievements was the building of the city of Babylon, connected with which historical records do not exaggerate the vastness,



which even in ruins has awakened universal astonishment. She first collected from her provinces two millions of men, and laid out the city on either side the river Euphrates, in the midst of an extensive plain. Herodotus states that the walls were sixty miles in circuit, eighty-seven feet in thickness, and 350 in height; and each side of the city, being square, was fifteen miles in length. It had twenty-five gates of solid brass in each side, with four towers between every two, and four additional ones at the four corners; streets running straight from all the gates, and each street being fifteen miles in length.

The city contained 676 squares, each two miles and a quarter in extent. On the west side of it a lake, forty miles square, was dug to the depth of forty-five feet, into which the river was turned till the work was finished. The Euphrates divided the town from north to south, the two sides being connected by a magnificent bridge, at each end of which stood a palace, communicating by a subterraneous passage. The palace also contained three rooms of brass, and to it the hanging gardens (one of the wonders of the world) were afterwards attached.

Semiramis also built the temple of Belus, or Baal, the ascent to the tower being by stairs on the outside; and on the top she placed three golden statues of Jupiter, Juno, and Rhea, with a table of beaten gold



forty feet in length and fifty in breadth. The riches in this temple have been calculated to amount to above twenty-one millions sterling. In addition to these vast works, she hewed an obelisk out of one of the mountains of Armenia, and at almost every stage of her passage through Media, either cut through the solid rocks or erected beautiful statues and edifices, and laid out foundations for immense future cities.

Not content with her own extensive dominions, she determined to penetrate into India; and learning that the natives of that region relied upon their elephants, she (having no means of procuring these) slaughtered 300,000 oxen, and when her subjects had divided the flesh amongst them, she caused the hides to be stuffed, and so placed upon camels as to deceive any but the very closest inspection; by an ingenious contrivance, also, each of these figures was worked by a man placed in the interior. Stabrobates, the Indian king, sent ambassadors to the invading foe, to inquire who Semiramis was, and to threaten her with a cruel death if he should prove victorious: but she derided his threats, and replied, that he should soon learn, from her own actions, who and what manner of person she was.

Upon the first onset, victory was for some time doubtful, until Semiramis herself obtained it by her admirable resolution; subsequently, however, she



suffered a reverse,—for the Indians, having discovered the counterfeit of the elephants, so pressed upon the main body of her army as to render the camels, by their terror, obstructive to military discipline. At length the two monarchs engaged hand to hand, and Semiramis was wounded in the conflict by the king, first in the arm by an arrow, and then, as she turned to retreat, in the shoulder, the swiftness of her horse saving her from the mortal blow. The loss in this engagement was so prodigious, that she returned to Bactria with only one-third of her original army, and shortly after, she died at the age of sixty-two, after having reigned forty-two years over the greatest part of Asia. Her epoch, though disputed, appears to have been about B.C. 1215.

As might be expected, several legendary accounts have been transmitted relative to her death. One of these states that an oracle had foretold that when Ninyas conspired against his mother, her reign should terminate. Upon her return from India, she was informed that her son was plotting her destruction ; when, either in anguish at so great perfidy, or despairing of successful resistance to the oracle, she resigned her crown without an effort, and died, or, as some say, was put to death, immediately after.

From the wonderful actions attributed to this remarkable woman, it has been considered that the



performances of many have been blended into one character ; but this does not detract from the certainty of fame attached to her. The characteristics of her mind seem to have been determination and a power of governing the feelings of others, which enabled her to direct their wills to her own purposes. So majestic was her presence, that she is said upon one occasion to have quelled a tumult : though disturbed during her toilet, she out with her head, half dressed. A statue representing her thus, was erected to commemorate this singular effort. Still, to all great natures, corresponding faults are incident, and so we find in the Assyrian princess, ambition and a recklessness fatal to many, in her pursuit of fame. To empty distinction, she sacrificed expense, labour, and frequently the life of her subjects, and raised a temple of questionable renown upon the hearts and homes of thousands. What a lesson for human pride ! After centuries, the stone pages on which her deeds are stamped, have mostly crumbled before the touch of Time, and the mists of long oblivion have come down upon even the letters of her country, so as now scarcely to be deciphered by the studious research of the antiquarian and the scholar.



## Penelope,

WIFE OF ULYSSES.

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B.C. 1193.

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WHEN the beauty of Helen, the daughter of Tyndarus, drew suitors for her hand from far and near, Ulysses, king of Ithaca, an island in the Ionian Sea, charmed with a loveliness which has been recorded as one of the wonders of the world, joined the throng, and in common with the rest of her lovers, took a solemn oath to protect those personal charms they estimated so highly, from evil—a rash vow, afterwards bitterly expiated! But Helen was not destined to be his, and soon despairing of success, Ulysses transferred his addresses to the fair Penelope, the daughter of Icarius, and speedily forgot, in the affection she warmly reciprocated, that he had ever aspired to the spoiled beauty's favour. The island king bore his young bride to his home much about the same time that Menelaus succeeded in carrying off the envied palm, and securing a wife who was to work him so much woe, in the person of Helen. Against the inclination of her father, who wished to detain her in her native Sparta, Penelope obeyed her



husband's wish for retirement, and shut herself with him within the rocky barriers of their kingdom, pleased, while "the world forgetting," in the smiles of her Ulysses, to be by it forgot. Here her hours were spent in blissful tranquillity, and when she was gladdened by the birth of a son, the little Telemachus, the happiness of the pair seemed complete. But not long was this state of content to last ; news soon came of the abduction of the queen of Sparta, and that an expedition was projected to avenge the insult, and rescue Helen : Ulysses had been one of those most earnest in vowing to shield her from harm, and it was expected that he would be foremost amongst the Grecian princes in the attempt to deliver her.

But since the period of the oath, Ulysses had become an altered man ; perhaps he did not estimate Helen as highly, now he was the possessor of Penelope's heart, and thus placed her wrongs of secondary importance. He was seized with dismay at the prospect of leaving his wife, and bent upon devising some stratagem by which to evade a necessity which had become abhorrent. The plan he determined upon, was to feign madness : he had been remarkable for prudence and forethought ; this calamity would forbid any assistance in council as well as any personal aid in the field, and Ulysses fondly imagined he should be left in peace. Carrying out his project, he committed



a variety of absurdities—yoked a horse and a bull together, and ploughed the seashore; and instead of sowing corn, threw salt around. His artifices, however, were of no avail: the truth of his apparent insanity was suspected, and Palamedes hit upon the expedient of placing the infant Telemachus in front of the plough—when the event justified their doubts, Ulysses turning aside the instrument, that it might not injure his child. Unwillingly, therefore, was he forced from the sunshine of his Penelope's presence; and when at length he tore himself away—

“ Like to a fearful traveller, who, dreading  
Assaults of robbers, leaves his wealth behind,—  
Trusted his heart with her, and carried with him  
Only an empty casket.”

The Roman Valeria, when left a widow, and solicited to marry again, replied, “ My husband is only dead for others, for me he still lives, and will ever do so.” Artemisia immortalized her regrets, under the same calamity, by the splendid monument to her departed lord, which grief scarcely suffered her to live long enough to complete: the celebrated reply of Thesca, the wife of a noble Syracusan, and sister of Dionysius the Tyrant, when accused of conniving at her husband's escape; and the voluntary participation of Panthea, Arria, and Eponia, in the fate of theirs, show them to have been animated by the same spirit.



Nearer our own time, we behold the courageous wife of the philosopher Grotius, Marie de Reigesberg, and the no less brave Lady Nithsdale, compassing the escape of the men they loved, and remaining, to dare all danger, habited in male attire in their stead : but none of these cases surpass the enduring devotion of the constant Penelope, who now parted with her husband for twenty long years, as it proved, during which interval no solicitation was spared, scarcely a threat left unspoken, to win her from her wife's allegiance to the absent one, and cause her

“ To set another image in the niche  
Where shone her vanished idol.”

For half that period Penelope patiently sustained the load of her grief. Her days were passed as Ulysses would have best loved to see her ; but the Trojan war was now at an end, the other Grecian princes had returned, and the delay of her husband filled her breast with anxiety. Fidelity, however, never failed, and tired at length by the importunity of her suitors, she flattered them with the promise that she would listen to their vows, and select one as soon as she had finished a piece of tapestry, which, as fast as it progressed, she unravelled at night, and by thus protracting the period of its accomplishment, gave rise to the applicable proverb of interminable labour. Untiringly, she each morn,



“ With hope replenished and rebuoyed  
Returned to whence she came, with like intent,  
And weaved her web again.”

After twenty years, however, Ulysses reappeared in the garb of an outcast beggar, unrecognised by all but the instinctive affection of herself, and the indelible sagacity of canine attachment :—

“ Argus, the dog, his ancient master knew :  
He not unconscious of the voice and tread,  
Lifts to the sound his ear and rears his head ;  
He knew his lord, he knew and strove to meet,  
In vain he strove to crawl and kiss his feet,  
Yet (all he could) his tail, his ears, his eyes,  
Salute his master and confess his joys.”

The faithful wife was delivered from the persecution of her suitors, whom her virtues and imperishable excellence appear to have rendered insensible of the progress of time.

It is painful at any time to detract from the hold which virtuous example ought to have upon the mind, by throwing any doubt upon its authenticity ; still, candour compels us to confess, that though described by Homer as a model of female excellence, traditions at Mantinea allude to her having been buried there, after she had been repudiated by Ulysses ; and Hyginus states that she married Telegonus, her husband's son by Circe ; this, however, borders closely upon the mythical.



Her original name has been confounded with Arnea, or Amirace, and that of Penelope has been derived from some river-birds of the same appellation, which are supposed to have saved her from the waves, when Icarius, attempting her destruction, had exposed her to them, from an oracle foretelling the disgrace of his daughter. Moreover, some few state that Ulysses survived his return sixteen years, and fell a victim to the rebellion of his parricidal son Telegonus, after he had himself put another of his children, Euryalus, to death at the instance of Penelope. This seems to glance at a family chapter of horrors, not to be exceeded by those of his comrade Agamemnon with Clytemnestra, or the other fabled monstrosities of the Tyndaridæ. So true is it, as Shakspeare observes, that

“ Virtue of vice must oftentimes pardon beg,  
For leave to do it good ;”

and thus mythology, and the histories attached to it, often seek to correct the manners of the present age, by inferences drawn from fabled guilt and unauthentic iniquity. Besides, it infers no slight exercise of the judgment, so accurately to divide the lines of truth and error, as that the one should impart its application to the mind in all its fulness, undarkened or diminished either by the hallucinations or deceptive obscurity of the other.



## Aspasia,

WIFE OF PERICLES.

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B.C. 420.

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FROM the earliest ages, Woman, the type of the Beautiful, has formed an important element in the education of Mind: and among the questions which arise relative to Grecian history, none is more difficult of solution than that which concerns the social condition of its daughters. In those days, however necessarily reserved might be the female character, we are told that gentlewomen of the highest rank went abroad unaccompanied by their husbands, were admitted to the banquets, and shared the libations of the other sex, and even went down to traffic with foreign merchants on the shore; a circumstance, however, which on one occasion caused an Argive princess, with her attendants, to be carried away captive.

Sir Walter Raleigh being once on a visit at the house of a lady, "a very stately dame," overheard her in the early morning inquire of her domestics, "Is the piggy served?" Amused by the question, and wishing to jest with her upon its having reached his ears, Sir



Walter, upon seeing his hostess coming down to dinner, surrounded by a group of friends, applied the same to herself, "Madam, is the piggy served?" To which she replied, "You know best whether you have had your breakfast." Now the Grecian lady was expected to be as thrifty in her domestic economy as the stately dame mentioned in this anecdote of Lord Bacon's; and a readiness of repartee, in fact a certain intellectual shrewdness, united with attention to the smallest domestic minutiae, formed the characteristic of women in the Homeric ages. Helen and Penelope are familiar to us plying their shuttles; Nausicaa goes down to wash linen in the river, while scriptural characters are represented, as in the case of the daughters of Bethuel and Laban, performing the office of water-carriers.

Under the Dorian system, the object of Lycurgus appears to have been that of converting the women into men by subjecting them to all the hard discipline of the gymnasia, and many of the Lacedemonian women were accordingly remarkable for their masculine feats and occupations. Thus Cynisca, daughter of King Archidamus, was a perfect jockey, and sent her own horses to the Olympic games—an example not to be admired, yet the result of a system of education which produced numerous instances of courage, decision, and independence, together with so excessive



a devotion by women to their country, that many heard of the death of their sons in battle with apparent indifference.

In Athens, while the supreme domestic control rested with the wife, we yet find women taking part in political and philosophical inquiries ; and the study of poetry, eloquence, and even mathematics, cultivated alike by the young of both sexes. Learning and luxury went hand in hand ;—stay, let us draw a picture :—

Before us stands a handsome mansion ; statues of eminent men adorn its walls, mingled with classic emblems and mythological groups fancifully disposed. Seats of stone, polished with oil—one of those fashions which gave Aristophanes opportunity for the punning compliment he paid the city, of “shining (the same word means “greasy”) Athens,” are set without. The door leading from the portico is concealed by magnificent purple hangings. Lighted by windows formed of lattice-work in bronze, the paving of the interior of the ground-floor is composed of rich mosaic ; sofas and divans covered with scarlet and purple, bordered with a deep gold fringe, are around. Yonder on one side is the library ; it is not large, but the shelves and cases of polished wood contain an ample store of volumes, *i. e.* rolls of parchment or papyrus, with the names of them affixed on



pendent labels. Anon, the lady of the house approaches.

It is early, for the Athenian matron is a worshipper of Aurora, and knows the value of the morning hours. Fresh from the luxurious process of the bath, followed by the careful supervision of her maidens, under whose skilful hands every charm attains tenfold efficiency, we behold her descending the marble steps leading from the women's apartments, called "Thalamoi," and see her cross the large central hall towards the principal front, built, according to the custom of the Greeks, towards the south.

Here in the peristyle (a colonnade or broad veranda), looking over the gardens, fanned by soft breezes sent from the Piræus over laurel copses and beds of flowers, we may correctly imagine her pacing to and fro beside Pericles, imparting an air of graceful brilliancy to the more masculine topics of conversation, and occasionally addressing a lively sally to the younger members of the schools, who, walking in the train of their elders, and listening to their lessons with grave attention, make way for them as they turn in the promenade to retrace their steps.

Radiant with intellectual pride and conscious happiness, Aspasia moves along. Ælian has left us a sketch of some of her distinguishing traits: let us endeavour to fill it up, and show how, assisted by the



classic drapery of the Greek costume, looked the loveliest woman of her time.

Tall and very graceful, a cloud of slightly-waving ringlets surround a countenance whose charms gain an additional lustre from that peculiar auburn tint, acquired artificially by many of her countrywomen—in her case, natural. Her eyes are full and large, their expression penetrating, yet softened beneath the rich depth of their long fringes. Her nose is slightly aquiline, “something of the shape called by the ancients a royal nose ;” the tint of her cheeks and their softness have procured for her the appellation of “Milty” (the Blooming), by which she is generally denominated among the Phocians. Add to these advantages, beautifully-small and well-shaped ears, “lips red as twin cherries, and teeth whiter than snow,” and Aspasia stands before you. A pure white veil shades the countenance of the fair Ionian : her form is robed in a snowy tunic of the delicate manufacture of Attica, furnished with loose hanging sleeves, confined at intervals by golden *agraffes*. It is gathered round the waist into a girdle, fastened by a magnificent clasp. Over this is a shorter robe, composed of purple, with a wide border of embroidery ; and around her shoulders floats a gorgeous mantle, also of purple, discovering the under-garments, beneath which her feet appear, protected by sandals of white satin and gold,



setting forth to advantage those delicate ankles of which she is so justly proud. Upon her hands shine a signet or two, and other rings of value ; but Aspasia is very simple in her tastes, and dislikes superfluous ornament.

And now let us investigate the mind of Aspasia, which was still more remarkable than her person. Nature had apparently gloried in investing this rare creature with every moral and physical endowment she could bestow. Not contented with giving her powers of appreciation for much that was beyond women's ordinary capabilities, the same lavish hand had endued her with practical as well as theoretical talent : so that she was able not only to listen, but to teach. Ladies of the highest rank flocked to her house for lessons in accomplishments ; the wisest and most gifted men found beneath that refined roof something beyond woman's graceful prerogative—the power to call forth, as with a fairy's wand, all that is most intellectual in the other sex ;—they found assistance and advice, as well as interest and sympathy. Eloquence, politics, philosophy, were alternately and completely discussed ; and when these proved too severe, the lighter arts of conversation were successfully tried, varying to the humour of the moment. Socrates attributed full value to those hints upon rhetoric, which the sweet musical voice (so frequently lauded)



of Aspasia imparted to him, and acknowledged how much he was indebted to her for improvement, if not for actual instruction. Pericles gave all the credit to his wife of that eloquence for which he was so remarkable, and declared that it was from her lips he had first learned the principles of the art of policy. It is well known she studied successfully the maxims of government; and her extreme power over this man, the supreme head of the first and most powerful state of Greece, proves that she also understood them perfectly in a domestic point of view.

Painting, architecture, and statuary attained their meridian splendour in the age to which she belongs; and of all these Aspasia was an enthusiastic patroness. The degradation of women in the moral scale was doubtless great, immediately before her time; but all that she could do to ennoble and elevate the mind, and render women what they should be—meet companions for man,—was done.

But Athens, jealous and uncertain Athens, grew weary of the attachment subsisting between Aspasia and her lord. The sprightly graces of her native country, Ionia, of which she was an ever-attractive example; the perfection in which she acquired the talents and excellencies of the other sex, had no power to charm, or were only productive of envy to the fickle people. She was accused of being indif-



ferent to the honour of her Athenian sisters, and of impiety.

Phidias the sculptor, and Anaxagoras the philosopher, and former master of Pericles, shared the denunciations levelled against Aspasia. Not daring to attack the ruler himself, his friends were first assailed; and the design of his enemies was by this means to discover how the people stood affected towards their recently universal favourites. To save the two first, Pericles was powerless; in vain he essayed: a prison and death were the end in one case, in the other a perpetual exile. But Aspasia, his beloved Aspasia, the joy, the comfort, and the ornament of his home, was not to be sacrificed so lightly. Pericles himself defended her against the accusations of her foes, and it is recorded that so earnestly, so strenuously, did he perform the task, that his tears, even more than his arguments, saved her from the fury of an enraged populace, at a juncture most critical to his fortunes, and all those connected with them.

This excess of feeling is the best testimony that can be brought to the excellent qualities distinguishing our heroine. Pericles was no weak enthusiast, talking himself into fits of morbid tenderness. So far did he carry his powers of endurance indeed, that, following in the steps of a false philosophy, he deemed that the sensibilities of the man sorrowing for the loss of his



children, would sully the glory of the general and statesman. At the time when the plague carried off his eldest son Xantippus, Pericles had not only to lament his death, but that of a sister, together with many other relatives and dear friends. Never, however, was he seen to weep, or show the usual signs of emotion at the grave of any of his kindred. At length, however, his youngest-born, Paralus, fell beneath the iron hand of the arch-conqueror; and in this instance, the emotion he felt, but strove hitherto successfully to control, overmastered him. When the moment arrived for him to crown with flowers the pale brow of his lifeless child, tears forced their way, the voice of the stern ruler was rendered inarticulate by sobs, and the yearning of the parent conquered the resolution of the man.

Not long afterwards, Pericles himself fell a victim to the infection. We know not if Aspasia also were one of the number; but it is related of him, that when almost at the point of death, those around him conversed upon the rare combination of talents he possessed; and running over his exploits, calculated the extent of his success. The dying man, who had overheard them, though he had appeared senseless during the conversation, interrupted them suddenly with the following words:—

“My friends,” he said, “you surprise me; you have



treasured in your memories, and now applaud highly a series of actions in which fortune has had a great share, and which are common to many other generals beside myself. Oh ! do not forget what is to me by far the most glorious circumstance of my life—that of never having caused a single citizen to put on mourning.”

Our heroine has been given the authorship of the celebrated funeral oration pronounced by her husband in honour of those who fell in the first summer of the Peloponnesian war : so touching was its eloquence, that the mothers whom it had rendered childless, invoked blessings on his head, and showered flowers around him. Oratory, which as a study and art was uncultivated in Athens until this time, could thus, to a pitch of enthusiasm, impress the hearts of the multitude, when the speaker was one whose youth had been passed alternately in the camp and the schools, and who had preserved the most attractive traits of both ; and the writer, that “most perfect union of intellectual and personal beauty that the world ever produced,”—the half Venus, half Minerva—*Aspasia* !

“ O Love and Death !

Ye have sad meetings on this changeful earth,  
Many and sad ! but airs of heavenly breath  
Shall melt the links which bind you, for your birth  
Is far apart.”



## Cornelia,

WIFE OF GRACCHUS.

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B.C. 135.

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It is to be lamented that in many instances the fame attached to certain characters is little more than conventional, so far as regards the recorded facts by which it is substantiated, so that we have to take the excellence which successive generations have applauded, almost for granted, or find that historians have treasured up only a meagre incident or two by which to confirm our opinion. Or, perhaps, we are driven to the necessity of judging (in the absence of known incidents) of the original by its result—in other words, of the virtues and graces of the parent by the more ample evidence of the famous descendant; and although this must ever be an uncertain test of the real character we seek to know, yet it is the only one applicable to the case of Cornelia, to whom it has greater force, inasmuch as the solitary anecdote of her parental care identifies her with the fame of her illustrious sons.

The name Cornelia appears to be associated with greatness, since, besides the mother of the Gracchi, of



whom we are about to write, there are several other Roman matrons so called, all of whom have been distinguished, and not the less by the appreciating regard shown to their virtues by their husbands. The first wife of the great Julius Cæsar, the daughter of Cinna, was universally and highly esteemed ; she was Cornelia the mother of Julia, Pompey's wife ; and the funeral oration pronounced over her remains by the widowed Cæsar, proves how justly she fulfilled her duties in the domestic relations of home. A few years later, when Pompey was basely assassinated in the Bay of Alexandria, we read of another wife of his, called also Cornelia, who, unable to succour her unfortunate husband, was yet sufficiently near him to witness his death-agonies ; nor does this lady appear to have been inferior to her namesakes in conjugal love or self-abnegating devotion : so interesting, indeed, is the account of her, that we are tempted to insert it.

When, finding his fortunes desperate after the battle of Pharsalia, Pompey steered to Lesbos, it was for the purpose of fetching thence his wife, whom he had placed there, at a distance from the dangers and distress of war. The news of defeat had found Cornelia in the indulgence of the wildest dreams of approaching victory ; doubly agonizing, therefore, was the reverse when it came, doubly great the revulsion



of feeling. With tears the messenger informed her of her misfortunes, and desired her, if she wished to see Pompey, to hasten to the only ship he possessed, and where he anxiously awaited her. At first the blow proved too great; she fainted, and lay for a considerable time without signs of life: but recovering, she hastily recalled her scattered energies, and flew through the city to the sea-side. Silently Pompey received his agitated partner, and mingled his regretful tears with her own. "Why, alas!" she at length said, "risk you your precious safety by seeking me? why come you to share the fate of an unfortunate woman? Go, Pompey; leave me. Would I had long since executed my design of quitting this life! I feel now that I have been fatally reserved to add to Pompey's sorrows."

Consoling and supporting her, Pompey at length continued his course, determining to throw himself upon the protection of the king of Egypt. Achilles, who had formerly been a centurion in Pompey's army, was actually in possession of the regal authority, for Ptolemy was a minor. This wretched man, affecting to encourage the hopes of Pompey, had arranged his death. He rowed to the ship of Pompey in a boat, and invited him with every sign of friendship to land.

For a short time it was now necessary for the latter to leave his anxious wife. With misgivings deep and



bitter he did so ; and on parting, quoted to her a verse from Sophocles, signifying, that “ he who trusts his freedom to a tyrant, from that moment becomes a slave.” Cornelia frantically hung over the ship as he departed, and the sound of her sobs mingled with the roar of the waves. Her hopes rose when she saw crowds of people hastening as if to welcome her husband to the shore—hopes too speedily to be dashed into the deepest abyss of horrible despair ! At the moment when Pompey rose, supporting himself upon his freedman’s arm, to greet the expectant multitude, he received his death-stroke. Septimius stabbed him in the back : Achilles followed. Cornelia’s shrieks were heard even at the land, as her seamen put sails to their ship, and thus escaped the Egyptian galleys. But we digress too largely from the object of the present memoir, and return to the Cornelia of our history.

All of us have longed to hear more of that fair Roman lady, the type (as we are taught to regard her) of every beautiful and exalted impulse of maternity, whose answer to her guest, when urged to display her treasures of gold and precious stones, was in those memorable words ; but unfortunately, the records we have of her are so slight and unsatisfactory, that they would scarcely exceed the limits of a single page. We know, however, that she was the daughter of Scipio Africanus, and amongst other offers of marriage,



received one from a crowned head. Attached at the time to Titus Sempronius Gracchus, she preferred the simple dignity of the life of a Roman citizen, to investing her brows with that crown of thorns which too often lies hid beneath a diadem ; nor had she reason to regret her choice. Distinguished in intellect as well as appearance, she wrote as well as spoke in terms worthy of remark and preservation. There are extant several of her letters, and they are far above mediocrity, both as regards the original and forcible grasp of idea, and the pure and elegant language in which they are composed. Her children were educated entirely under her own care, and completely justified its advantages : it was said of them, that though they possessed so liberal an endowment of natural gifts as that few could reach their excellence, they yet owed more to the education their mother had bestowed upon them, than even to Nature herself. The part they took in subsequent life was so far laudable, that the untimely fate it entailed, especially when viewed in connection with the circumstances inducing it, elevate them to the position of the noblest martyrs in the cause of popular liberty. The commotion incident to their ardent exertions to wrest the oppressed Roman people from the tyranny of the nobles, caused the first civil blood to flow ; and though it afterwards at different times deluged the state,



yet it fructified the harvest of free and temperate legislation.

Gracchus himself, the husband of Cornelia, was twice consul and once censor. Of his sons none survived, out of a numerous family of twelve, but the two of whom he had such just reason to be proud, and who inherited the integrity of their father in addition to the sterner qualifications of bravery and spirit. In the lifetime even of Cornelia, she had the honour of having a statue erected to her, bearing the inscription "Cornelia, Mater Gracchorum." She left one daughter, who married the younger Africanus.

The anecdote referred to was in a few words, as follows:—A lady of Campania, who piqued herself upon the beauty and splendour of her ornaments, once came to visit Cornelia. After having displayed them to her heart's content, she demanded of her hostess a similar favour. The two young Gracchi, Tiberius and Caius, were absent at the time in the public schools: they shortly after returned.

"Behold!" said the Roman mother, as she entered, leading them by the hand, "here are my only jewels; these are my most glorious ornaments!"



## Portia,

## THE WIFE OF BRUTUS.

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B.C. 48.

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OF this Roman lady as little is authentically recorded as of Cornelia ; but her fortitude, prudence, philosophy, and courage, together with the conjugal affection and fidelity which designated the later events of her life, render hers a history more actively interesting, though, while that of one is unequivocally commendable, the prominent action which closed the other is fraught with a far deeper signification, and must be regarded in a widely different light to that in which her own times considered it. Suicide can never be justified ; our lives are God's intrusted talent, and belong solely to him ; and the observation of Montaigne, that "there is more constancy in suffering the chain we are tied to, than in breaking it ; more evidence of fortitude in Regulus than in Cato," cannot be impugned. "Security, indolence, impassibility," he goes on to say, "and the privations of the evils of life which we pretend to purchase at the price of dying, are of no manner of



advantage to us. That man evades war to very little purpose, that can have no fruition of peace ; and for as little does he avoid toil, who cannot enjoy repose." The resolution not to survive the husband she loved, and the aspiration to rejoin him in another world, could profit the courageous Portia but little, when the fate of both was rendered doubtful hereafter—if not the hope positively forfeited, by the means taken to arrive at the desired end. "It is not the fear to live," says Seneca, "that is virtue ;"

"That's virtue which can evils great withstand,  
And not retreat, nor shift to either hand."

But far differently was Portia taught ; to the blessed lessons of Gospel truth, and the true philosophy of endurance, she was alike a stranger. Death, which is never frightful but to the bad, while to a safe conscience often bearing the aspect of that beautiful angel, attributed to him by more than one country's legendary belief,—Death, had no terrors for the unconscious heathen. *Beside* Brutus, she was capable of enduring the most terrific tempests of calamity ; *without* him, she despised existence : and as her example may have stimulated the devotion of a Paulina, or the fortitude of an Octavia, so to us it affords a profitable lesson not to be distracted from the cowardice of evading ill by the glare of false courage, which



impels us to rush upon it ; not to take presumption for heroism, nor the inconsiderate despair which tempts death, for the calmness of faith which looks beyond it.

Portia indeed was surrounded by instances of self-destruction lauded by the world, and of frequent occurrence not only amongst her more proximate friends, but in her own family. Her husband had set her the example, and she deemed it incumbent upon a Roman wife, to follow it unhesitatingly. Misfortune and herself had become well acquainted, and the dangerous conspiracies with which she was associated, through those she loved, as well as the civil embroilment of the times, must have long prepared her mind for, and made it familiar with, such a termination to its worldly hopes and fears. To the circumstance of these adversities and vicissitudes, she owes her notoriety. Grief is favourable, not to say necessary, to the development of some natures ; and many a character had sunk into obscurity and inaction, if clouds had not loured, and waves tossed, proving the energy of their opposition. The poet's lines might fairly be applied to herself, and to few better :—

“ So, though less worthy stones are drowned by night,  
The faithful diamond keeps his native light,  
And is obliged to darkness for a ray  
That would be more oppressed than helped by day.”

The sister of Cato of Utica, generally called “the



Younger," received not only great commendation from the orator Cicero, but an actual funeral encomium at the period of her death. After this sister, so remarkable for her virtues, who was called Portia, it is probable that Cato named his daughter, the subject of the present sketch. She was early married, having espoused Bibulus, but in no lengthened interval became a widow. After Brutus had divorced Claudia his wife, he married her, and appears to have regarded her up to the period of her death with the most consistent affection.

Portia aspired not only to bear her husband's name and share his home, but to be confidante of his most secret plans and actions. It is possible that Brutus doubted her capacity for understanding and entering into them ; at all events, he dreaded that, possessing a foible generally considered common to her sex, she might learn important circumstances only to betray him. We find she suspected, if not actually learned, that he was involved in projects at which she could only guess ; and piqued as much by the implied doubt of her prudence, as distressed to find herself excluded from the full participation in whatever dangers or difficulties menaced him, she determined to test her powers of endurance, and school herself to Stoic indifference and Spartan fortitude. For this purpose she inflicted upon herself a serious wound,



and thus ascertained with what amount of courage she could bear pain. When her husband discovered the action, he asked her with much astonishment what motive could have induced her to it. She replied, that she had thus endeavoured to judge whether she had courage to share his most hidden secrets. Surprised at such unexpected constancy, Brutus confessed to her all the plans for the assassination of Cæsar, which were then maturing, and even mentioned to her the conspirators' names. His revelations were received with horror and astonishment, but she promised to keep them inviolate, and faithfully maintained her vow. When Brutus had left her, however, to go upon his fatal errand, her woman's nature prevailed, and she swooned ; but speedily recollecting herself, she took such resolution to insure the obedience of her eyes and countenance, that no one guessed the terrible secret she concealed.

Notwithstanding the ingratitude which must ever attach to the memory of Brutus, who thus abetted the destruction of the man whose beneficence he had so largely experienced, the former appears to have been actuated by some sterling motives in his conduct here and during the war following. Addicted strongly to literature, and the author of several works, one of which, an *Essay on Virtue*, has been most



favourably mentioned, though now unfortunately lost to the world, he possessed a soul so calm in the midst of danger, that, surrounded by the agitations of a camp, where the soldiery were with considerable justice auguring misfortunes upon the very eve of battle, he sat in his tent composing an Epitome of Polybius, and only discontinued his employment in time to prepare for the conflict. He met his misfortunes and defeat in the most philosophic manner; but finding all lost, he threw himself upon his sword's point: a precipitation signally fatal to many beside himself.

The head of Brutus was sent to Rome, to be thrown, in token of expiation, at the foot of Cæsar's statue; but Portia received his ashes, and, following the example of her husband and father, determined not to survive her dearer self. Finding she was debarred all other means of suicide, she devised a strange mode of death, painful as singular. Shakespeare, by an anachronism, placing her decease before that of Brutus, makes the latter thus describe her end:—

“ Impatient of my absence,  
And grief that young Octavius with Marc Antony  
Have made themselves so strong,—for with her death  
Those tidings came,—with this she fell distract,  
And, her attendants absent, swallowed fire.”



Cleopatra,  
QUEEN OF EGYPT.

—  
B.C. 45.  
—

MORE like the glittering pageantry of romance than the record of actual existence,—more resembling the magnificent scenery of a theatrical representation than a distinct historical picture,—the life of Cleopatra, a vision short, but grandly consistent from the beginning to its end, passes before our eyes. Transitory indeed as splendid, leaving behind it no grand results, no improvement nor aggrandisement of nations, no substantial memento, it is still more like the pictured paraphernalia of an empty drama, or the untasted banquet of a dream, in that, almost mythical, save to the student's eye, it is gone, with scarcely a trace to prove it ever existed!

The woman who, in the pursuit of her own unjustifiable policy, is believed to have murdered her young brother, and who scrupled not to ask, as a first favour of her lover Antony, the death-warrant of her only sister—she who was so devoid of feminine feeling as to



have a prisoner (though condemned already) brought into her presence to test the effects of flowers poisoned by her own hands—would possess no more claim to our interest than she does to our respect, did not the bold grandeur of the mind which could plan, and the consummate art and tact which turned nature's advantages to execute, such schemes of ambitious diplomacy, fill us with amazement, and a species of admiration.

The last king of the powerful race of Ptolemy (founded by the so named general of Alexander the Great) having put to death his eldest daughter Berenice and her husband, died a few years after, leaving his kingdom to his next daughter Cleopatra, who with the eldest of her brothers was according to the custom of that house, to reign conjointly. At the time of the death of Auletes, his eldest child Cleopatra was about fourteen, her brother some three or four years younger; another son, called like his brother Ptolemy, and a sister, Arsinöe completed the family. The temper and talents of the boy king were by no means of a promising description, but those of Cleopatra made up for the deficiency and while they rendered her fully alive to the difficulties of her position, afforded the greatest anxiety to the selfish courtiers, who had already reckoned on the feeble and facile nature of young Ptolemy, to project designs of their own, upon the kingdom.



The late king had thrown himself upon the protection of the Romans, and had begged them to see his will carried out, and to take the guardianship of his son. The rival of Julius Cæsar, Pompey, who had previously been of considerable service to Auletes, at this time had just been defeated at Pharsalia, and he hurried to demand of the Egyptian government, that refuge and assistance, which gratitude alone should have at once conceded.

It was just at this period that Cleopatra, terrified at the intrigues of her brother's ministers, and even fearing for her life, on account of the dissension and enmity which existed between herself and them, fled into Syria, and there endeavoured to organize her adherents into warlike array. It is to be supposed that this girl of scarcely sixteen had at least skilful advisers, for all her plans were characterized by a wisdom and energy scarcely credible at such an age. She was perfectly successful in her attempt, and marched back to Egypt, to claim with the sword her just participation in her father's throne.

The perfidious murder of Pompey, just as he was setting foot upon that shore where he was taught to expect a sanctuary (a murder which moved his noble adversary even to tears, guessing, as he readily did, the slavish treachery whence it issued), left Julius Cæsar, as Roman consul, the sole right of settling the



dispute between Cleopatra and her brothers. He accordingly cited them to appear before him, decreed that they should disband their armies, and accept such sentence as he should pass.

It is to be presumed that the decision of Cæsar would have been at least an impartial one; but Cleopatra, whose maxim it was to leave nothing to chance that her own persuasions could accomplish, determined to visit the powerful Roman in person, and enlist his sympathies in her cause. To do this, was no easy task; private access was difficult, if not impossible, for the affected supporters, though secretly the foes of Ptolemy, lined every avenue leading to the presence of him she sought. Obstacles, however, only sharpened her determination; she had studied Cæsar's character well, and was firmly resolved to turn its weaknesses to her own account. Procuring the assistance of a member of the household, named Apollodorus, she concealed herself in a mattress, or bale of linen, and in this undignified fashion, arrived (carried upon the shoulders of the chamberlain) in the apartment where Cæsar was, having safely passed through the citadel, under cover of the darkening twilight.

At the time when Cleopatra took advantage of this strange method of gaining an audience of her judge, she was in the first flush of those charms, whose effect, both time and care, in after years, seemed equally



impotent to diminish. Her face was, if not perfectly beautiful, at least so pleasing as to excite the admiration of the most casual beholder ; but her manner was the acme of graceful fascination, and constituted her most marvellous gift. She possessed the rare power of adapting herself with innate tact to the sentiments and temper of those with whom she conversed, not alone to the point of influencing them while in her actual company, but to that of leaving upon the mind, when she was no longer present, just the impression she desired. Of excellent natural development, her powers had been sufficiently cultivated to render her, even if deprived of personal attraction, a most agreeable companion. An accomplished linguist, speaking to perfection ten different tongues (she is said to be the only sovereign of Egypt who could understand the language of all her subjects), she was no novice in Greek literature, and studied the philosophy of that country with success. A voice combining power with sweetness, and brilliantly fitted for song, completed her qualifications.

But this woman, so fair to outward seeming, was totally incapable of the finer characteristics, the softer emotions of her sex. Education had planted and watered a fertile soil ; and, reared amidst the corruptions of an intriguing court, dyed with domestic murders, she too willingly imbibed the vices most captivating to our fallen nature. Ambitious, dis-



sembling, completely the slave to self, Cleopatra was yet, to all appearance, a beautiful, tender, and delicately-minded girl, employing the eloquence of suffering to attain a righteous purpose,—the restitution of her crown from her enemies.

We may easily imagine Cæsar's surprise, when, a perfect Niobe of grief, melted in glittering tears, she threw herself at his feet, and implored his protection. He was completely taken captive by the arts and attractions of the beautiful vision before him. Eloquent himself, he was silent during the burst of persuasion with which she addressed him ; nay, the conqueror of the world trembled in the presence of a feeble woman, and Cleopatra saw, long before, assured of favour and protection, she rose from her imploring attitude, that not only were these fully her own, but that a reinstated queen, she had obtained an empire still more flattering to her vanity than the throne of Egypt—over the heart of the hero.

Henceforth Julius Cæsar owned no will but hers, and the adherents of Ptolemy, with their king, soon learned that their judge had thrown off all disguise, and had openly espoused the cause of the young monarch's sister. This intelligence, totally unexpected as it was, threw the city into immediate arms. The king, urged by his attendants to the utmost fury, alternately wept and threatened, and at the head of



the populace attacked his presumed enemy. The Roman soldiers soon secured the young Ptolemy, though their numbers were not sufficiently strong to save their own general from some degree of risk. From an elevated position, his safety at length assured, Cæsar addressed the mob, and promised them an impartial judgment.

The next day a large assembly of the people was convened. Ptolemy and Cleopatra appeared in person, and in the presence of all, the will of the late king, their father, was read. Amidst general acclamation Cæsar declared that the young queen and her brother should reign conjointly, according to its instructions, while he made the younger Ptolemy and his sister Arsinoë joint monarchs of the island of Cyprus, which (since the Romans were in possession of that territory) was in effect a gift upon his part, to conciliate the favour of those he addressed.

One person, however, was too dissatisfied with the result of the arbitration to receive its arrangements in silence. Photinus, the young king's chief minister, who had been the principal instigator of the quarrels between him and his sister, went about the city of Alexandria, representing everywhere the determination of Cæsar to place Cleopatra alone upon the throne. Again a large force was raised, for the Egyptians dreaded the idea of a woman governing them,



and determined to struggle to the last, to avoid such a contingency. The Roman troops were few, their adversaries numerous and exasperated, yet, nevertheless, the smaller body, by skilful management, was enabled to take up a position, where, securely garrisoned, Cæsar awaited the reinforcements which ultimately rescued him from his predicament. One accident occurred during these terrible contentions, which will for ever be recorded with sorrow, for it occasioned an irreparable loss. The famous library of Alexandria, the intellectual accumulation of so many kings, and the receptacle of forty thousand volumes, was ignited by the vicinity of some Egyptian ships (set on fire by the Romans) to the quay near which it was situated. If Cleopatra was sincere in her patronage and love of learning, with how much regret must she have reflected upon this, one of the greatest evils which her quarrels had produced !

A warlike expedient resorted to at this period is worth recording. To harass and distress Cæsar, Ganymedes, who had escaped, with Arsinöe, his ward, from the custody of the former, determined to cut off the supply of water. At Alexandria caverns or vaulted wells received this important article once a year, upon the great swell of the river Nile, where, introduced by sluices or canals, it grew clear by degrees. The upper ranks in the city were thus sup-



plied with excellent water, every house having a reservoir, together with an opening through which it was drawn up in buckets or pitchers. But the poorer inhabitants were compelled to drink the running stream, which was muddy and unwholesome, there being no springs in the city, though the reservoirs had mutual communication. Ganymedes first caused all the caverns in that direction occupied by Cæsar to be stopped up, and then contrived to turn the sea into them, thus depriving the soldiers of all fresh water. Upon discovering this stratagem, the Romans filled the air with complaint, and Cæsar would have been obliged to abandon what was a most favourable position, if he had not by means of great energy and labour at length succeeded in sinking wells sufficiently deep to arrive at springs, which supplied the necessary wants of his thirsty followers.

Such endeavours, characterized by constant fluctuations of defeat and victory, kept the conflicting powers employed for a sufficiently long period to wear out the temper of both. Naval encounters, of which the entire inhabitants of Alexandria were the spectators from the roofs of the houses overlooking the port, continually took place, and ended for the most part in favour of the strangers. Once, when repulsed after obtaining several advantages, Cæsar, in endeavouring to secure his safety, entered a boat, which was speedily crowded



with such a host of persons, that it was in danger of sinking. Finding this the case, he hesitated not a second, but throwing himself into the sea, swam to his fleet, which lay some distance off; swimming with one arm, and grasping in the other hand the celebrated Commentaries, high above the water, he held a portion of his armour between his teeth, rather than let it fall into the possession of the enemy.

While these engagements were proceeding, the young king was kept strictly guarded within the fortress; Cleopatra was ever at Cæsar's side, and although so young, gave evidences of the diplomatic prudence and forethought, which afterwards she exemplified in so remarkable a degree. And now finding opposition only augmented the Roman courage, the Egyptians presented themselves before Cæsar, and requiring the restitution of their monarch, vowed that his presence should put a stop to all further dissensions. Scarcely, however, had he been restored to them by their noble opponent, than hostilities were re-commenced: nor was it until the accidental death of the young Ptolemy, which took place while endeavouring to escape in a boat after a decisive defeat on the Nile, that Alexandria and all Egypt finally submitted to the victor.

His authority established, the all-powerful Roman fixed the object of his admiration, the fair Siren



Cleopatra, upon the throne. For the sake of appearances, he associated with her in the sovereignty her younger brother ; but as this second Ptolemy was a child of scarcely eleven years old at the time, the crown might be truly said to grace the imperial brow of his beloved queen alone. For her he had commenced and carried on a profitless and expensive war : his affection for her had in the course of its dangers suffered so little diminution, that although everything was settled, and tranquillity restored at the beginning of the new year, he lingered, powerless to tear himself away, and did not leave her until the end of April. Together they sailed up the Nile ; and reclining at her side by day upon deck, surrounded by every splendid accessory that the lavish taste of the Egyptian queen could suggest, or banqueting with her during the dissipated hours of the night, applauded by the sycophantic voices of their retinue, the severe and temperate warrior seemed transformed into a spiritless Hercules, chained to the distaff of a second Omphale. But when at length he would have proceeded with her into Ethiopia, the faithful troops, whose attachment his victories, even less than the elevated tone of his courage, had indissolubly attracted, refused to watch their general further forget himself and Rome in the smiles of Cleopatra, and forced him to return home, contenting himself with projecting the enactment of a law



which should admit of his subsequent absence to make the beautiful Egyptian his wife.

The sister of Cleopatra, Arsinoë, whom he had retaken captive in the war, accompanied him to Rome ; where, fettered by chains of gold, she walked in his triumph, but was speedily released, and took up her abode in Asia, remaining there until Antony, after the battle of Philippi, caused her to be murdered in the temple of Diana at Ephesus, upon the instigation of her unnatural sister.

Upon the departure of her lover, Cleopatra, who had no fancy for a dull and insipid existence, turned her attention to those scenes of magnificence in which she supremely delighted. She never appeared in public without the most gorgeous retinue, nor wore other than the most brilliant costume. So far did she carry her arrogance as to assume the habiliments and head-dress of the sacred Egyptian deity Isis, and was thus represented by her coins and statues. Luxurious and frivolous, she was however not deficient in energy ; and without performing extraordinary deeds, managed to secure a degree of attachment from her people, who, after the death of her little brother Ptolemy, an event generally attributed to her agency, grew to regard the dreaded queen, whose dominion was formerly so repugnant to their prejudices, as their sole and admired sovereign. Then came



a journey to Rome, which she undertook for the purpose of congratulating Cæsar upon his Pontic and other triumphs, and carried out after her usual fashion of costly magnificence. She bore with her presents of immense value, and received in return the honour of having her form and countenance modelled in the finest gold, and placed on the right hand of the goddess in the temple of Venus.

Two years after, the wish of Cæsar as to the method of his death was fulfilled. According to Suetonius, he desired that which was "the least premeditated, and the shortest;" and when he fell pierced with three-and-twenty wounds from the assassin daggers, none ought more deeply to have mourned him than the woman who had professed for him such tender affection, and been the recipient of so much *cæcæ*. It does not appear, however, that her grief was either intense or permanent; and Sextus Pompey arriving in Egypt about the same time, she soon forgot in the smiles of a new adorer the cruel fate of him who "lived not in one age, but for all time!"

But the most important passage in the life of this vain yet charming woman was now approaching. That meeting with Marc Antony, which was to exercise so powerful an influence upon her life, finally closing those dazzling eyes upon the world in the meridian of their splendour, was already at hand. The knell of her



destiny had even now sounded, though her ear caught not the echo !

Brutus and Cassius, beneath whose daggers—" even at the foot of Pompey's statue, great Cæsar fell" shortly after, so far from being the objects of her disgust and abhorrence, received both arms and money from Cleopatra, to assist in their war against the Triumvirate. Marc Antony accordingly sent a summons to the queen, to appear and justify herself for this conduct ; and again placing reliance rather upon her personal advantages than on the justice of her cause, which this time was more equivocal than on the former occasion, she determined to bring over Antony to her interests in the same manner as that by which she had subdued Cæsar. No expense nor consideration was spared to render her appearance before him as effective as possible. Attended by a retinue gorgeously appointed, and bearing with her a profusion of splendid presents, she set out to meet him, proceeding through Syria towards Asia Minor. Upon her way she received several letters from him, written from Tarsus, where he then was, pressing her to hasten her journey ; but these she received with supreme indifference, and travelled as one thinking about a pleasurable visit rather than a citation from a superior.

She reached the Cydnus to launch a freight upon its liquid bosom unrivalled in the annals of magnifi-



cence and triumph. The galley which bore the beautiful Egyptian princess was a marvel of gorgeous ornament, radiant with gold, the cordage of silk, the sails purple. Meanwhile, surrounded by her attendants, their mistress reclined upon deck beneath an awning, and boys, dressed as Cupids, "stood fanning with their painted wings the winds that played about her face." Stay, we cannot do better than give the picture drawn of this historical scene by the hand of our greatest poet :—

"The barge she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Burned on the water : the poop was beaten gold ;  
Purple the sails, and so perfuméd, that  
The winds were love-sick with them : the oars were silver,  
Which to the tune of flutes kept stroke, and made  
The water, which they beat, to follow faster,  
As amorous of their strokes. For her own person,  
It beggared all description : she did lie  
In her pavilion (cloth of gold, of tissue),  
O'erpicturing that Venus, where we see  
The fancy outwork nature : on each side her  
Stood pretty dimpled boys, like smiling Cupids,  
With diverse-coloured fans, whose wind did seem  
To glow the delicate cheeks which they did cool,  
And what they undid, did.  
Her gentlewomen like the Nereides,  
So many mermaids, tended her i' the eyes  
And made their bends adornings : at the helm  
A seeming mermaid steers ; the silken tackle  
Swells with the touches of those flower-soft hands  
That yarely frame the office. From the barge  
A strange invisible pèrfume hits the sense  
Of the adjacent wharfs. The city cast



Her people out upon her ; and Antony,  
Enthroned i' the market-place, did sit alone,  
Whistling to the air, which but for vacancy,  
Had gone to gaze on Cleopatra too,  
And made a gap in Nature."

Thus, up the river upon which Tarsus stood, sailed Cleopatra ; and as she approached her destination, crowds of people lined the shores, who, raising altar in her honour, ushered her to the presence of Mark Antony, with clouds of incense and storms of acclamation.

" 'Twas Heaven, or somewhat more !

For she so charmed all hearts, that gazing crowds  
Stood panting on the shore, and wanted breath  
To give their welcome voice."

Cleopatra was at this time twenty-five—the very acme of her loveliness. No longer the designing girl, scarcely cognizant of her own beauty, though anxious to turn it to the best account, she was now fully aware of the graces with which Nature had endowed her favourite ; for had she not tested them, and in every case come off the conqueror ? Not a single detail was omitted to give her the appearance and create the impression most calculated to take prisoner the tastes or weaknesses of Antony ; and so complete was the effect she had justly calculated on, that a rumour spread throughout the city, as it poured forth to receive and welcome her, that it "was the goddess



Venus, arriving in masquerade to make Bacchus a visit for the good of Asia."

So landing she was received by the emissaries of Antony, who invited her, at their master's bidding, to sup with him that evening. This invitation was not accepted. Cleopatra was impatient to commence her scheme of conquest, and it better suited the effect she intended to produce, that she should play the hostess rather than the guest. Accordingly, she pleaded fatigue in excuse; and proposed that he should banquet with her in tents hastily arranged upon the banks of the river. Thousands of coloured lamps were, under her direction, hung amongst the branches, and the gloom of midnight was converted into day.

Antony, whose somewhat coarse nature was easily influenced by display and pomp, was overwhelmed with surprise and admiration at the reception given him by the queen of Egypt, and the following day entertained his fair visitor in return; and now banquet succeeded banquet, each surpassing the preceding in magnificence, though Antony confessed himself fairly outdone by his rival's extravagance. On every occasion she entered so completely into the spirit of the hour, that he beheld in her a second self, an exact reflection of his wishes and predilections, clothed in the fanciful and graceful robes alternately of the goddesses Venus, Isis, or the crescent-crowned huntress of the



woods, who at his side made bright the sylvan dimness with the sunshine of her presence.

It was at one of these feasts that the anecdote of the pearl, immortalized in poetry and painting, occurred. This act of the queen's reckless improvidency was the result of a wager between herself and Antony, that she would preside at a banquet of which the cost of one single dish should exceed the whole outlay of his series of fêtes. The bet was accepted. This done, Cleopatra ordered a single cup of vinegar to be placed before her, and when the curiosity of those around her was excited to the highest point, she took from her ears two pearls, the smaller of which was valued at what would be about 50,000*l.* of our money, and, dissolving it in the acid, drank it to the health of Antony. The second was about to follow its companion when Plancus, the umpire, saved its sacrifice by declaring Antony overcome. This pearl, afterwards divided, formed the ear-rings for the celebrated statue of Venus, placed by Agrippa in the Pantheon at Rome. The description of vinegar which Cleopatra made use of to dissolve her pearl, without injuring her own health, is lost to posterity.

Her lover accompanied her to the capital of her kingdom, where still more gorgeous scenes were enacted to amuse and keep him near her. But at last the news arrived that Fulvia his wife was dead, and he returned



to Rome with the ulterior intention of, at no lengthened interval, marching against the Parthians. What must have been the jealousy of Cleopatra when, instead of herself, whom he had promised to espouse, she heard that her fickle admirer had married Octavia, the widow of Marcellus, a lady of great beauty, and deservedly beloved by all who were happy enough to be near her ?

For a considerable period Cleopatra was now forsaken ; and she appears to have endeavoured to distract her attention from disappointment by some means of an estimable character. Upon the site of the Alexandrian library she erected a new one, and to its store of volumes Antony added 200,000 from Pergamos. These books she not only collected enthusiastically, but many of them she is believed to have carefully studied. It was fated, however, that her lover should be restored to her artifices, and a short interval only elapsed before Antony was again in her presence, having brought back the remnant of his scattered army after the defeat of the Parthian expedition into Phœnicia, where Cleopatra joined him with reinforcements, clothes, and money.

The gentle and noble-minded Octavia, who had also hurried with all a wife's anxiety to the assistance of her lord, awaited him at Athens. But the ascendancy of the fair Egyptian was again paramount :



through her tears and supplications Antony was induced to send instructions to his wife to return to Rome, while he followed Cleopatra to Alexandria—putting off a necessary expedition against the Medes until the succeeding spring. It is just, however, to state that he was chained to the side of the fair temptress by representations which he must have been very differently constituted to the impressionable and misjudging creature he was, wholly to set at defiance. He was told by the minions of Cleopatra, that the queen was so distressed at the thought of losing him, that her health was undermined, and death would be the result. To avoid this dreadful catastrophe, the prominence of which she was careful to lend great plausibility to, by constant tears and the appearance of wasting grief and disease, he consented to remain, and sacrifice the honour and affection of home to this exacting and unprincipled woman :—

“ Oh ! Marc Antony  
With a fine scorn did toss the world away  
For Cleopatra's eyes—so rich, so poor !”

But although Octavia might support her wrongs in silence, her brother Octavius Cæsar, desiring nothing so much as to commence hostilities against a man who had pilfered the Roman state to lavish gifts upon Cleopatra, and for her sake had deserted every duty of his station, and now concluded by heaping insults



upon the "noblest lady in character and station in the empire," hastily assembled his army ; but he took the precaution of declaring—not against Antony, but against *Cleopatra*—what was in fact civil war—Roman to Roman.

Perhaps, as she grew older, Cleopatra also lost some of the courage as well as the rashness of youth. Physical timidity now appears to have overcome her, and she persuaded Antony to engage his opponents by sea, contrary to the opinions of his most experienced advisers—"not on account of the superior chances of victory, but, in case of being vanquished, for the better opportunity of escape." She brought to his assistance two hundred galleys, and again the magnificent boat which had borne her on the Cydnus, flaming with gold, and hung with purple, followed by a similar one for the use of Antony, might be seen at their rendezvous in expectation of a battle.

On the 2nd of September the naval engagement of Actium took place. Doubtful for a long time, Antony might even then have been successful, had not Cleopatra, frightened at the sound of the fight, suddenly taken the lamentable determination of flying ignominiously from the conflict. Her galleys followed her ; and, still worse, Antony, springing into a boat, pursued and overtook her ; thus ruining for ever his reputation and efficiency with friends and foes. Upon



reaching the deck where Cleopatra was, the Roman sank abashed and melancholy upon a seat, his countenance buried in his hand. For three days the unhappy pair, horror-struck at the conduct they had been betrayed into, exchanged not a single syllable, and wisely forbore, though with effort and weeping, mutual but fruitless recriminations.

Even in this emergency, however, the shrewdness of Cleopatra did not forsake her ; neither, unhappily, did her own misfortunes teach her more scrupulousness in the means she employed to retrieve as far as possible her lost steps. Arriving at Alexandria, she caused her ships to be crowned as if returning victorious ; and as soon as she had landed she ordered all the principal men of her kingdom of whom there was the smallest suspicion, to be put to death, lest, hearing of her defeat, they should conspire against her.

In the midst of that dark tide of blood which she had caused to flow, she formed that singular project, which she partially executed, of transporting her ships into the Red Sea, together with all the treasures she could muster, across the Isthmus of Suez, some thirty leagues broad, intending there to embark, leave Egypt for ever, and, accompanied by the degenerate Roman, who for her sake had lost the world—nay, was content to lose it—seek another empire and court,



where she could give up her whole soul to tranquillity and love.

But the Arabs frustrated these intentions by burning her vessels; and she now turned her attention to securing such terms with the victorious Octavius as might best provide for her safety and position. The latter, anxious to possess himself of her vast treasures, and emulous of the honour of parading this wonderful creature in his triumph upon returning to Rome, temporized with her, though he refused to accept overtures, even of the most humiliating description, from Antony.

There are conflicting opinions whether Cleopatra at this juncture listened to the suggestions of Octavius, and absolutely meditated treachery against the lover to whom apparently she was so devoted. At all events Antony suspected that such was the case, and lived in perpetual dread of the cruel and perfidious woman, whom he nevertheless almost worshipped. To dispel his doubts she paid more than usual attention and court to him; observed her own birthday as one of mourning, while upon his she presided at such a gorgeous entertainment, that "many of the guests who came poor, returned wealthy;" and crowned her complaisance with the gift to Antony of ~~the~~ his wife and children of Seleucus (governor of Pelusium, who had deserted to the enemy), in order that ~~the~~ treachery of



that person might be revenged by putting her to death !

But foreseeing not the less clearly the possibility, nay, almost inevitable end of all this, she spent a considerable portion of her time in studying the various effects of different poisons, and found that the bite of some descriptions of venomous creatures was an easier though a slower death than other means of destruction. She tried experiments upon human subjects, and deliberately watched them take effect, turning from the blackened remains of one victim to test her horrible nostrums upon another, living and breathing, to be as speedily consigned to eternity. Antony, perhaps wrongfully, finding the nature of her studies, deemed himself in danger from her arts, and insisted on every dish at her table being tasted before he would eat a morsel. Pliny tells us how once she took a strange though simple method to put an end to his distrust, as well as to show him how ineffectual his precautions would be, had she so direful an intention. Antony and herself wore, according to the ancient custom, crowns of flowers at the banquet ; these she poisoned at the extremities, and when the wine was circulating freely, and gaiety at its climax, she proposed drinking off these flowers to Antony. He acceded, and after having plucked off the end of his wreath,



he threw it into his goblet of wine, and raised it to his lips.

"Stop!" said the queen, arresting his arm, "behold the poison against which you fortify yourself by so many precautions! If I could live, losing you, judge for yourself whether I want either opportunity or reason for sacrificing your life. Let a prisoner be brought hither," she exclaimed, turning to her attendants; "he shall drink and die." The event justified her words.

Meantime, Octavius, to whom news had been conveyed of the coronation of Antony and Cleopatra, with her children, lost no time in advancing to the gates of Alexandria. But Antony had regained his martial spirit, and, resolved that he would dearly sell his life, made a vigorous sally, took the enemy by surprise, and returned victorious for the time to the city. Armed as he was, he flew to throw himself at the feet of Cleopatra, who caressed the bleeding warrior, and instead of urging him to follow up his advantage, drew him to a magnificent banquet, after her usual fashion, in honour of the exploit.

On the morrow, Antony and Octavius again engaged, both by sea and land; but seeing the admiral belonging to Cleopatra surrender to the enemy, Antony was seized with a panic, and considering the queen a traitor to him, flung aside every other con-



sideration, and madly sent to challenge his opponent to single combat. For an answer he received word, that "if Antony were weary of life, there were other ways besides that to sacrifice it." Ridiculed by Cæsar, and apparently forsaken by Cleopatra, Antony turned the fury of his wrath against the latter, whom he hurried to seek, and to avenge himself for her perfidy.

For some time past, Cleopatra had been constructing a large building adjoining the temple of Isis, and rivalling that structure in the superb beauty and loftiness of its design. Here she had removed (probably foreseeing what should befall her) her principal treasures—gems, gold and silver, ebony, ivory, and a quantity of perfumes and aromatic wood, with which it was rightly considered she intended to raise a funeral pile whenever she should consider her death inevitable. To this refuge, called her "Monument," the affrighted queen, trembling, whether justly or the reverse, at the fury of Antony, fled precipitately, and shut herself within its walls, which were constructed after the manner of a fortress; and to avert the wrath of Antony, she sent messengers to inform him that she was dead. This intelligence, received in the extreme of mental distraction, without a moment's consideration of the deceitful nature of her ~~from~~ from whom it emanated, threw Antony into the opposite extreme of despair. All his love, so potent alike in the hour



of prosperity or of adversity, burned afresh within the heart of the distracted Roman ; and shutting himself with a slave in his apartment, he commanded him to plunge his dagger within his breast. The slave refused, but stabbed himself instead. Following what he considered was meant for an example, Antony had just fallen upon his own sword's point, when the doors were burst open, and an officer of the queen's guards rushed in to inform him she was still alive. Upon hearing her name, he opened his eyes, and learning she was indeed not dead, he suffered his wounds to be dressed, and perhaps indulged in the vain hope that he might yet survive them for her sake.

Selfish to the last, the Egyptain met this devotion and forgiveness by distrust. Desiring to be carried to rejoin her, the dying Antony was borne to the "Monument," where she was shut up. But urging the fear of treason, she would on no account permit the gates to be opened to him, and insisted upon his being drawn up through the window, though the exertion would inevitably expedite the death of her lover. It is no extenuation of this selfish policy, that she herself assisted her maidens in the task, or that her countenance was seen with frantic anxiety depicted upon it. They laid him within her apartment, and, hanging distractedly over him, Cleopatra's tears fell fast upon his brow, chilled with approaching death,



while even in that last moment he tried to soothe her, and calling for a cup of wine, drank to the health of his ever-worshipped idol. But words were no longer articulate, his eyes alone expressed the emotions filling his heart ; so,

“Speechless for a little space he lay,  
Then grasped the hand he held, and sighed his soul away.”

Scarcely was all over, before an emissary of Octavius arrived to confer with the queen. Finding it impossible to gain access to her, a stratagem was employed. Her design to kill herself was too evident to all ; and as Octavius desired not only to take her alive, but to obtain possession of the wealth she probably intended to destroy with her, he managed, by sending one messenger to engage her at the gate, to gain entrance for Proculeius, another, by a ladder raised against the window. Upon finding herself entrapped, Cleopatra drew a dagger, and endeavoured to stab herself ; but this was prevented, and her dress carefully searched, lest other means of destruction should be concealed.

Guards were now placed around her self-constituted prison, and the proud Egyptian appeared at last willing to resign herself to her fate. Obtaining, at her earnest request, the permission to charge herself with the interment of the unhappy Antony, she set about arranging it with all the grandeur usual to the



Egyptian obsequies. The body was embalmed at her command, and placed among the tombs of the kings of Egypt.

After the first days of mourning were past, Octavius went to visit her ; she received him with all the graceful dignity of her palmiest days—threw herself at his feet and implored his protection, as she had so successfully done on two former, and somewhat similar, occasions. But her beauty, that vaunted loveliness hitherto so irresistible, was disfigured by watching and tears, her influence was no longer omnipotent, its chain,

“ Around two conquerors of the world was cast,  
But for a third too feeble, broke at last.”

Octavius spared neither protestations nor compliments, but he was not the less unmoved by her wiles : he might exclaim,

“ Her eyes have power beyond Thessalian charms  
To draw the moon from heaven : for eloquence  
The sea-green sirens taught her voice their flattery ;  
And while she speaks, night steals upon the day  
Unmarked of those that hear,”—

yet regard her with no further interest than as the brightest ornament to the glorious procession marking his triumphant return to the Roman capital,—the mere temporary possessor of treasures his cupidity had long marked for his own.

She on her part saw her power was gone—she pierced the thin veil of his disguises, and determined



to die rather than be led fettered through those streets, she had once traversed with acclamations—a queen !

Her measures were all provided : a spy in the Roman camp privately acquainted her with the intentions of her conqueror ; and at length Dolabella sent to inform her that in three days she would be despatched with her children to Italy.

But Octavius mistook the spirit of the Egyptian princess, if he imagined that one at whose feet conquerors had bowed, would ever submit to swell the triumph of her enemy. To mislead him, she requested permission to visit Antony's tomb, which being granted, under the care of a strong guard, she in pathetic terms apostrophized the dead, hung the tomb with wreaths, and having arrayed herself with regal pomp, commanded a sumptuous entertainment to be prepared. Shortly afterwards, rising from the feast, she wrote a letter to Octavius, which at once disclosed her intended suicide ; and that notwithstanding all his vigilance, " the serpent of old Nile " had in sad truth escaped beyond his power. A disguised peasant, one of the queen's faithful followers, concealed an asp in a basket of figs, which the soldiers, who had orders to search everything, allowed to pass unexamined. Having applied the reptile to her arm, the poison soon communicated itself to the heart ; and when Proculeius, who was



sent by his master the moment her letter arrived, reached the fatal spot, all was silence in the chamber of death, until broken by the reply of Iras, in answer to his question, "Was this well done, Charmian?" "Yes, Roman! for such a death became so great a queen!" With these words, the attendant immediately expired upon the body of Cleopatra.

To his own disgrace, in the haste of thwarted vengeance, Octavius carried the children of the dead queen to Rome, and forced them to adorn his triumph. Nor did he end here, for an image of Cleopatra as she appeared after death, with the asp upon her arm, was added to the pageant; and he afterwards had the barbarity to put Cæsarion, the eldest of her four children, to death. The others, Alexander, Cleopatra, and Ptolemy, were indebted for their education to the noble generosity of Octavia.

The life of this remarkable woman, though contracted within the limit of thirty-nine years, presents a wonderful combination of accomplishments which dazzle, and of crimes which deter. Indeed, she is one of those who, alternating between the masculine energy of the heroine and the tender frailty of the woman, exhibit the vehement resolution of the one, with the pusillanimous ferocity of the other. Sense and sagacity in a continual contest with appetite and passion, rage overcome by tenderness, courage falling upon the



smallest danger into fear,—we have in her remarkable nature the glory of the pearl yet in its softened and unfinished state. But the brilliancy of the jewel is there still, and, to quote the lines of one of our newest and most promising poets,—

————— “ In her we read  
Of those great spirits who went down like suns,  
And left upon the mountain-tops of death  
A light that made them lovely !” \*

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\* Alexander Smith.



## Arria.

WIFE OF CÆCINNA PÆTUS.

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A.D. 46.

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PROVIDENCE has permitted the feminine temperament to exhibit a striking combination of strength and weakness. The woman who turns pale at the sight of a cut finger, or starts with fear if a mouse run across the room, often shames the boldest man by the nerve she displays when face to face with real danger. Silent endurance of misfortune, calmness under the decrees of that which we miscall fate, are characteristics generally conceded to the softer sex. Yet these are but that passive courage whose name is patience,—there is another of a more active nature. In some rare organizations we see mental strength united to physical energy, and both inhabiting a form remarkable for its delicacy and sensibility.

In the reign of the Roman emperor Claudius, the province of Illyria revolted under Scribonianus. The consul Pætus espoused the cause of the rebels and their governor, and plans were laid to depose the emperor—always imbecile, and already advanced in



years,—and substitute a more efficient sovereign in his stead.

The wife of Pætus (the latter sometimes confounded with another of the same name, his son-in-law) was a woman in the summer of life, beautiful and delicately nurtured. Her attachment to her husband was so extreme, that the calamities, and even death of her children, had scarcely power comparatively to affect her. Yet she was no unfeeling mother. Once their only son, a youth of great promise, and idolized by both parents, fell ill of a severe and virulent disorder. Almost simultaneously the father was struck down by the same malady, and Arria had the unspeakable grief of dividing her time and thoughts between the two sufferers, whose chambers she alternately visited, bringing such comfort and solace to each, as the presence of a beloved and judicious nurse never fails, even in the hour of death, to impart.

Night after night she watched, with untiring eyes, beside the beds of these two dear ones, with but little hope of seeing either of the frail vessels weather the storm of disease, but rather dreading every moment to behold them submerged by the dark tide, herself left stranded and forlorn upon the desolate shore!

Her exertions were successful where her heart was most firmly enshrined: her husband recovered. Gradually, consciousness and strength returned to the



invalid ; life, rudely torn from its dear earthly companion, came creeping back to cheek and limb, and Arria could again converse with him, without whom existence were an intolerable burden, which her heathen notions forbade her not—nay, rather enjoined her,—to sacrifice, by following him.

And what was the topic of conversation ? The same ever. The father's heart, knit to his handsome and intelligent son, ached to be permitted once more to behold him, to hear that his strength was returning, and the flush of youth and hope again brilliant on his countenance. Morning after morning he inquired in agitated accents how his boy had passed the night : if he slept, if he ate, whether he had asked for him ; when he might with his own eyes judge what ravages the disorder had committed upon his cherished one's graceful form ?

Alas for Arria ! her son was dead ! Not only had he perished, but the lifeless remains, lately instinct with triumphant youth, had been borne from the house to be again restored to their original earth ! And Pætus was to know nothing of this. The result of such a shock was too doubtful to be hazarded ; and still the tenderness of the wife, checked the sobs of the mother, and she replied with a deception, if ever excusable, certainly in such a case, “ that he was better ;” rushing heart-broken from the



chamber the moment after, to give vent to the tears she could not control, and compose her countenance before she again sought his presence.

Well ! as we have said, Cæcinna Pætus joined the insurrectionists, and shared the defeat of the governor of Dalmatia. The latter was killed, while his companion was taken prisoner, and under the care of a strong guard, ordered on board a vessel, to be conveyed to Rome for trial and punishment.

This terrible conclusion was in itself sufficiently grievous to the devoted Arria ; but the distress was augmented when she found herself refused the melancholy gratification of sharing her husband's captivity, or of accompanying him in the ship which was to transport him to the presence of his judges.

The sails were already set, and all was ready for the voyage, when the beautiful wife, her hands clasped imploringly together, her eyes filled with tears, and her whole attitude evincing the extremity of anxiety and eager hope, made one last attempt to arouse the sympathy and compassion of the soldiers who were to bear her husband from her sight.

" A person of your prisoner's rank," she said, addressing herself to the officer in command, " will assuredly be permitted some attendants : you cannot deprive a consul of the domestics necessary to wait upon him. I will undertake every requisite office.



I shall be much less trouble, much less expense to you, than others. Permit me then to go with him ; believe me, you shall have no reason to regret your lenity and compassion."

But no entreaties would prevail with the stern men she supplicated ; her words were disregarded, her presence rudely ignored. She watched with distracted gaze the ship unmoored, and at length, when no further hope remained that a lingering feeling of pity might plead her cause, she followed unattended in a small fishing-boat, keeping the vessel in sight which contained all she held dear.

On arriving at Rome, her worst fears were confirmed. Messalina, the wife of Claudius, was in vain entreated to save the husband of a woman, whom she admired and loved. When before the emperor, Junia, the widow of the Dalmatian governor, thinking to appeal to her in their similarity of circumstances, accosted her.

" Do you think I will hold intercourse with such as you ?" she replied to her advances. " You in whose very presence your husband was destroyed, and yet are still alive !"

This speech showed those around her that, in the event of the condemnation of her beloved Pætus, she had determined not to survive him. Trasea, who had married her daughter, questioning her on this subject,



endeavoured to reason with her, upon the fruitlessness of such a sacrifice, beseeching her that her friends might not lose them together, their children have to mourn the loss of both their parents, at the same moment.

Urging her, he happened to say, "What ! if I should ever stand in the same sad plight, and should like your Cæcinnæ be condemned to death, would you that your daughter, my wife, should sacrifice her life as you propose to do ?"

"Would I?" was her answer ; "ah ! most sincerely, if she had lived as long in your society, and become as entirely identified with you, as I have been with my husband."

Finding her resolution immovable, several attendants were placed around her, with strict injunctions never to leave her alone. Her quick perception soon discovered their intention.

"You will gain nothing by your cautions," she exclaimed—"nothing : and you will be the cause of my dying still more miserably. Nothing shall prevent my determination to set my sad heart at liberty : it is out of your power, do what you will."

As she said these words, she flung herself with violence against the wall of the apartment ; her head struck it forcibly, and although the blow was not sufficient to deprive her of life, it so stunned her,



that for a few minutes, she gained that temporary oblivion, whose waters she thirsted so deeply to taste, once and for ever.

Slowly she recovered her senses. "Did I not tell you that if you deprived me of an easy means of destroying myself, I should devise a violent one?—look to it, I will be as good as my word."

Claudius, less impracticable than his rough soldiery, refused not to the unhappy Arria, the privilege of sharing the last hours of life with the condemned prisoner. They entered together the dreary dungeon, which was to be his home until the hour of his execution, and here, even in such an extremity, the tenderness of his wife threw a halo of brightness around the dark and sombre prison of Pætus, until at times, under the influence of her devoted affection, he almost forgot his misfortunes, and the fate that menaced him.

Perhaps, however, her presence at such a moment—the sight of one, with whom he had spent so many happy hours, and from whom the cold and impassible hand of death was so soon to divide him, might have unnerved the criminal, and caused him, in those more frequent moments, when he realized his position, to shrink from the fate, which grew harder to contemplate at every succeeding demonstration of his wife's attachment. Certain it is, that though Cæcinna Pætus had



gone to battle without a misgiving, the near approach of an ignominious fate, robbed him of all his energy, and his mind sunk into a weak and powerless torpor beyond all the endeavours of Arria to elevate or support.

It was permitted to him to die by his own hand, instead of by that of the executioner ; and for this intent, a poniard was left within his cell. This means of avoiding the more public death, seemed to Arria (as it would have done to Pætus, had he not lost all courage at his approaching fate) a far preferable doom, and she urged him to avail himself of it.

Vain effort ! her entreaties were disregarded—her arguments failed to convince. Pætus shuddered at the sight of the instrument of his deliverance, and refused to turn it against his own heart.

Seeing his irresolution, and, perhaps, feeling that she herself was its principal cause, Arria tenderly, but firmly, took the dagger from his hand, determined to set him the example. Plunging it into her own breast, she withdrew it again immediately, while with expiring energy, and a smile which irradiated her parting glance, she exclaimed, “ Do thus, my Pætus—it is not painful ! ”

The above is by no means the only instance on record, of such heroic determination. Sextilia, the wife of Scaurus, and Paxea, the wife of Labeo. thus



encouraging their husbands to escape threatened danger, voluntarily surrendered their own lives, to afford them in this extremity, sympathy and example. Fulvius, a favourite of Augustus also, had a spouse, who, seeing her husband disgraced and menaced, through her own unadvised disclosure of a state secret, threw herself upon the sword with which he had resolved to kill himself. Our heroine's character, nevertheless, appears the most interesting of all, and her conduct, however mistaken, must arouse a feeling of admiration in every breast. A Latin verse, immortalizing her conjugal devotion, may be thus paraphrased :—

“ With ebbing life, the faithful Arria's hand  
Gave to her lord the crimson-stained brand.  
‘This wound, my Pætus ! is unfelt,’ she cries,  
‘Tis thine which kills,—in thee, my own life, dies !’ ”



**Boudicca,**  
**QUEEN OF THE ICENI.**

—  
A.D. 59.  
—

IN these days, when our native land claims the honour of standing first among the nations of the world, now that England's refinement is only equalled by the naval skill of her warlike sons, we can scarcely realize the scene which met the eyes of the Roman legions when, about the middle of the first century after Christ, Suetonius Paulinus attempted to add our little island of Anglesea, to the already numerous conquests of victorious Rome.

That narrow channel which the Menai bridge—a wonder of art—at present spans, was covered by the ships of the all-powerful empire. To oppose these, the ranks of our wild and savage ancestors were ranged along the shore, armed with weapons, whose appearance would now fill us with surprise and horror, and of which the very uses have passed away. Amongst their husbands and fathers, wandered creatures, looking more like furies than women, strangely clad, with long streaming tresses, and bearing flaming torches, which they waved to and fro, shouting defiance and imprecations.



tion against the foe. If we add to these, a group of Druid priests, white-robed and bearded, uplifting their arms towards heaven, and imploring its assistance in unearthly rhymes, the efficacy of which they further endeavoured to increase, by horrible sacrifices consummated at the foot of their altars, we shall scarcely wonder that the Roman soldiers needed all the encouragement of their general, and each other, before they had courage to advance and attack barbarians, who, however terrible in appearance, were too undisciplined to contend long with the conquerors of the world. The capture of Anglesea, was the signal for an unanimous attempt, upon the part of the unfortunate Britons, to recover their liberty. The colony of Camelodunum, our modern Colchester, with its strong fortress filled with Roman soldiers, then those of London and St. Albans, falling into the hands of the enraged people, were hastily pillaged and burned, and the victorious insurgents, whose number increased at every step, put themselves under the command of one, who had been too deeply wronged not to enlist every energy, against their common oppressor.

Prasutagus, king of the Iceni (a name comprising the inhabitants of Norfolk and Cambridgeshire), aware of the conflicting interests, the dangerous enemies, both avowed and covert, surrounding his children, endeavoured, before death summoned him away, to



secure for them a powerful protector, in the person of the Roman emperor. For this purpose he divided his inheritance between that potentate, and his own two daughters, who, with their mother, were solemnly bequeathed to his care : Nero reigned at this time in Rome.

Boadicea, the king's widow, was possessed of considerable personal attractions. Her figure was tall and commanding, her countenance full of dignity ; she was descended from a line of illustrious ancestors, and above all, was endowed with a courage and intrepidity, which would not have disgraced the most valiant of her subjects. We may imagine her grief, and the indignation of her disappointment, when she found herself robbed by the covetous Romans, of the whole inheritance of herself and children, her principal nobles in chains, and the late king's relatives treated as bondmen, and deprived alike of freedom and property. Reduced to penury, and loaded with injuries, she determined to head an army composed, if we may believe the statement of the Roman historians, of more than two hundred thousand men.

Seated in a chariot of war, with her two young daughters beside her, did this unfortunate queen hasten from rank to rank, exhorting her soldiers to bravery, encouraging them by her presence, and stimulating them by her example.



"A woman and the widow of a king," she said, "addresses you. Your war-cry has often risen at the voice of a queen, your arrows have leapt from the bow-string, your swords from their scabbards, to defend at her appeal, the cause of liberty and justice. Not now, however, would I claim your allegiance and remind you that it is for your sovereign you fight : I would have you think of me only as of an oppressed woman, imploring at your hands, protection against the tyrant, revenge for the loss of liberty, of fortune, and of home ; for the insults heaped upon herself, and her defenceless children."

Inflaming their rage by a just picture of the violence of their conquerors, she reminded them that they were placed upon the level of slaves to be punished with blows ; and could hope for nothing but an increasing accumulation of oppression, shame, and insult. Then, skilfully she enlarged upon the recent advantages of the British arms, expressed her firm conviction that the voice of Heaven would declare itself in their behalf, and that, imbued with such desperate courage, no Roman legions would have strength to "bear the very shouts of so many thousand heroes."

"Think," she proceeded, "how vastly superior our number, is to theirs ; think of the motives which have induced you to undertake this war : never was greater reason to hope for an easy and complete victory ;



never was so strong a necessity imposed, to conquer or die. Such at least is the example which a woman is resolved to present you : let men, if they prefer it, live, and be slaves."

Poor savage queen ! poor Boadicea ! the event of the battle proved too sadly, how unequal is the contest between whole hosts of undisciplined warriors, and a comparatively small body of well-trained soldiers. The very size of her army contributed to its defeat. Pressed by the lances, and harassed by the horsemen of their enemy, the Britons, attempting to take refuge in flight, found themselves so closely encircled by their waggons, with the baggage, women, and children they contained, that escape became hopeless. Thousands fell in this terrible battle, while the loss of the Romans was comparatively small.

Now, were the horrible cruelties which the savage Britons had committed, in their recent sacking of the city of London, terribly revenged. The historian Tacitus, recounts a number of prodigies, said to have occurred immediately before the insurrection. Women, like to Cassandra of Troy, were seized by a prophetic fury, and were heard mournfully calling out, that ruin was at hand. A representation in the air, of the colony in ruins, had been observed (so said they) near the mouth of the Thames, while the sea assumed the colour of blood, and the receding tide appeared to



leave behind it, the phantoms of human carcasses. Lastly, the image of the goddess Victory (called by the Druids, Andate, and an object of their especial worship) was reported to have fallen, without any apparent cause, from its place, and to have turned its face round, as if giving way to the enemy. These portents, always implicitly credited by the ignorant and superstitious, were destined to be fully verified by the unhappy results of Boadicea's valour. In her hour of unrelenting vengeance, the city of London had been recklessly set in flames—the Roman soldiery, who had rushed for refuge into their temple (probably of Diana, which is supposed to have occupied the present site of St. Paul's Cathedral), were dragged forth and butchered in the streets: respect neither to age nor sex was shown, and it was scarcely likely that now, when triumph crowned their own arms, the conquerors would be unmindful of these outrages, or extend a mercy themselves had never experienced. The present conflict (it has been remarked), was now less of a battle, than a *battue*,—"a hewing down, and indiscriminate slaughter of everything that had life." The very beasts of burden were sacrificed; and even the adjoining lands of those persons, who had appeared to waver in their allegiance, were overrun and ravaged by the successful army.

It is marvellous how Boadicea escaped with life—



that she did so, however, is an admitted fact : after the battle, one of the sacred groves received her fugitive steps. Here, in a cave, within a few hours, might have been seen the lifeless body of a woman—her beautiful golden hair stretching to her feet, the plaited tunic of various colours, the chain of gold spanning her waist, and the regal mantle, which some friendly hand had disposed in enveloping folds around her still form, betraying the identity of the queen, though those once lovely and commanding features were distorted by the presence of death, in one of his most fearful shapes. The subtle touch of poison had unlocked for her the barriers of eternity, through which her spirit had passed to rejoin her husband and her children. In that one brief moment, she bade adieu to all the earthly griefs and passions, which had so wildly distracted her heart, and rendered life a burden of prolonged misery. Resolved that only her dead body should fall into the hands of her enemies, her own hand administered the fatal draught.

Contempt for death, and the reception of it with an exaggerated welcome, formed the grand basis of barbarian virtue ; and the woman who fell by her own hand, was formerly an object of applause and example. Now the consolatory doctrines of Christianity teach us a nobler lesson. The great principle of worldly probation, is the endurance of afflictions, which are



“but for a moment,” by the exercise of a faith, constant and inviolate, in the Unseen. Putting it upon no higher ground, it is indeed but politic, and therefore—

—— “better far, to bear the ills we know,  
Than fly to others, which we dream not of;”—

and he who is so much a coward, as to refuse to bow before the storms of adversity, will, upon moderate reflection, find in himself scarcely sufficient boldness to brave the anger of an offended Judge, when ushered with “all his imperfections on his head,” unsummoned, into the presence of his Maker!



Zenobia,  
QUEEN OF PALMYRA.

—  
A.D. 270.  
—

GREEN island of the burning sea !—torch which Art has raised over the grave of Nature !—star in the midnight of desolation !—thou solitary pulse of existence, in the stagnate torpor of silent decay !—Palmyra ! Queen of the desert !—Hail !

Despite the similarity investing most ruined cities, the emporium of the merchant-princes of Araby, preserves her individuality, entire. The “lingering twilight of a former sky,” yet hovers over this most beautiful of the conquests of time, and like Rome, she presents “a noble wreck in ruinous perfection !” Approach we with reverence the enchanted spot, undeterred by the scorching path, or the glare, which, like the lurid eyeball of a dying foe, the sun flashes back upon us, from the marble columns, calcined by heat, even to scathing whiteness, as though in vengeful hate, for the ravages that age has made upon the fair city, his glance so loved to look upon ! Let us awaken memory, and people from imagination, the



vast solitude once more, even within the period, when “the wisest of men” framed her beauty from his own design. The chaplet has indeed fallen from her brow—the tufted grass has twined about her broken diadem, but the jewels lie thickly strewn around her still!—Stay! we will replace them.

The desert surrounds us. “Red moving sand, or hard and baked by the heat of the sun, low grey rocks just rising here and there above the level of the plain, with now and then the dead and glittering trunk of a vast cedar, whose roots seem as if they had outlasted centuries; the bones of camels and elephants scattered on either hand, dazzling the sight by their excessive whiteness:”—in the distance, bands of Arabs dashing at speed, with their matchlocks gleaming like the lightning flash, while an occasional solitary traveller waters his jaded steed at the welcome spring. But see! the fourth day’s march draws to a close, and yonder a verdant tract, elevated, and with groves of waving palm-trees, marks our destination.

Now appear the villas of the luxurious Palmyrenes, palaces of grandeur and beauty. Passing these, which grow momentarily more frequent, we gradually ascend the eminence above the city, which occupies the entire plain below. Built entirely of white marble, a veyr fairy land of gorgeous temples and tapering pyramids, of stately porticos and slender obelisks, of domes,



columns, arches, and tall towers, one building, unrivalled for grandeur and extent, rises before us. It is the Temple of the Sun, approached by a vast number of Corinthian columns, and possessing a colonnade 4,000 feet in length, terminating in a magnificent mausoleum. This splendid edifice, "by the side of which the Parthenon is a toy," rears its radiant form aloft, and seems to stretch forth to the farewell embrace of the departing sovereign of the sky, whose rays return, again and again, to gild with true oriental lustre, some separate portion of the shrine, devoted to his worship.

We are entering the city by the "Roman Gate." The walls, broad and lofty, ten miles in circumference, are defended by massive towers : passing through the enormous arch, we find ourselves in streets, lined with palaces ; these are surrounded by beautiful gardens rich in embowering trees and shrubs, while ever and anon rise those groves of palm-trees, which have given the name to the city, superseding the original one of Tadmor, which Solomon bestowed, when he first built it, after the conquest of what was then termed Hamath Zoba, the kingdom in which it was situated.

Possessing a climate in the highest degree serene and balmy, the air, perfumed with flowers from adjacent fertile plains, and still more proximate parterres, never bore upon its wings an extreme



either of cold or heat. Healthful, but not vigorous, the mixed race of the Palmyrenes, who derived their origin from the Egyptians, while the vicinity of Persia framed to a considerable extent their manners, needed still less apology for the luxury which characterized them, when the nature of the soft Syrian clime they enjoyed, is considered.

And over this favoured region, alike disposer of the liberties, as she was sovereign of the hearts, of her people, there reigned a queen. Other realms have possessed several—Palmyra but one. It is to Zenobia, that half the grand edifices crowding her beloved city, owed their existence, while all of them had been embellished by her tasteful hand. From her genius and intrepidity, does Palmyra derive its principal historical interest and glory, just as its merchants drew from its unrivalled position, as regards that vast inland traffic, of which it was the depôt, a tide of boundless wealth and splendour. India poured its riches into the lap of the beautiful city; Europe added a stream of scarcely less valuable traffic; caravans daily arrived with “precious lading” from all parts of the world,—

“Plumes of bright birds, rhinoceros’ ivory,  
Gems from the isle of Meröe, and those grains  
Of gold washed down by Abyssinian rains.”

It was indeed a very garden of Aladdin, passing



through which, the mere traveller might find himself become suddenly rich.

The daughter of an Arab chief named Amrou, Septimia Zenobia was married when but a child, in pursuance of the customs of her tribe, and found herself a widow before she had reached the age of womanhood. Odenatus, prince of a considerable tract of the desert, now saw and fell in love with her. He was bold and ambitious, and having been the ally of the Romans in their conflicts with Sapor, king of Persia, signalized himself by pursuing that despot to the very gates of his capital. In all his schemes he was eagerly aided by his young bride, who alternately went to battle at his side, or accompanied him in the hunt, a favourite pastime with both.

But Zenobia possessed faculties far beyond the instinctive courage requisite for such employments. Her mind was in advance of the age, and altogether beyond the position in which she was born; and while she shared to the full the wild ambition of her husband, she formed for herself habits of intellectual culture,—schemes for improvement,—far better and nobler for her subjects as well as herself. Studying the works of Homer, Thucydides, and Sophocles, her powers were capable of comprehending the reasonings of Socrates and Plato, and fathoming the deepest mysteries of philosophy. Active of body,



her mind, that insatiate child, which once awakened, craves ever for still rarer and less digestible food, kept pace with its grosser companion, but never slumbered. Her views were naturally clear, her understanding unclouded by many prejudices, her energy, determination, and perseverance in the path once entered upon, dauntless.

Odenatus and Zenobia reigned conjointly. Valerian, emperor of Rome, grateful for the assistance he had received from Palmyra, so far associated her king and queen in the empire, as to name them representatives of Rome, in the East. Odenatus received the title of Augustus, by a decree of the Roman senate, and this dignity, his widow assumed in his stead, when (the victim of a conspiracy, set on foot by his own nephew), he was assassinated while on a hunting party, in the neighbourhood of Emesa.

But the Romans, who were now under the sway of the cowardly and effeminate Gallienus, refused to confirm the succession of Zenobia to the honours her husband had enjoyed, to rewards, at the period granted as much to her own enterprise as to his—a sovereignty, the result of deeds of arms suggested by her policy, and carried out at the expense of great personal comfort and feminine retirement.

At the time of the death of Odenatus, Zenobia was the mother of six children—three sons, named



Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vabalathus ; and three daughters, Julia, Livia, and Faustula. Upon the news of the emperor's protest against her assumption of the supreme power, she immediately left her family, of which some of the members were complete infants, and taking the office of general, led her troops to meet the Roman legions, sent to reduce her to obedience.

Accomplished in all the exercises of the field, clothed in armour of polished steel, and mounted upon a beautiful white Numidian steed, which had borne her through all her victories, the pulse of the whole army beat as of one man, when she appeared at their head, preparatory to leading them to the encounter. Rome, even triumphant and all-powerful Rome, was doomed to succumb to the force of her tactics, and in a pitched battle experienced a total and ignominious defeat. She followed up her advantage, by sending her general, named Zabdas, an Egyptian of indomitable valour, into that country to oppose the Roman force ; and here again her plans were crowned with success. By this campaign, she added to her dominions a vast extent of country ; her sway extended from the Euphrates to the Mediterranean, while Damascus, Jerusalem, and Antioch, with many other cities of note, ranked themselves under her empire.

No longer distracted by foreign warfare, Zenobia



now commenced carrying out fully those plans for the embellishment of Palmyra, and the aggrandizement of its inhabitants, she had long meditated. Her private hours were devoted to the perusal of her favourite Greek and Latin authors ; her public duties comprised a routine of watchful care, which placed her subjects' interests, just as if they had been those of her own children, beneath the constant and weariless eye of a mother. So beloved was Zenobia by her people, that her chariot was never seen in public, without its approach being hailed by a perfect storm of applause ; nor can we imagine a much more attractive sight than that of this woman, who appears to have been strangely superior to most of the weaknesses, not only of her sex, but of humanity, melting into tenderness at the sight of their devotion, while she heroically repressed every selfish consideration, for their welfare.

Neither was it probable that one so well versed in those arts of policy and prowess which had raised the Roman name, would neglect them in the education of those, to whom she looked to sustain the empire which her talents and courage had rendered independent. Hence, with the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, were blended the manners of the Roman monarchs : her three sons received a Latin education ; Longinus, the Greek author, was appointed her secretary, and composed for her his famous "Treatise



on the Sublime." In some degree, this assumption of foreign manners, seems to have displeased the Arab chiefs, who, in the later period of her career, no longer voluntarily contributed their celebrated cavalry, one considerable element of her military strength; but the grandeur of her rule invested her subjects with a reflected glory, and national pride produced no less devotion to her cause, than policy and intrigue, so that, when the imperial purple devolved upon Aurelian, the province of Bithynia had already shaken off all but nominal allegiance, to the Roman empire.

The new emperor, however, was not of a temper to endure tamely the loss of that vast wealth which had formerly found its way to the Roman treasury from the East, but was now diverted to Palmyra. He was resolved that the limits of Rome should be once more restored to those, which marked its dominion in the age of the Antonines. After summoning the queen to submit to such terms as he might decree, and virtually to dispossess herself of what an ambition akin to his own, had won, finding his message treated with indifference, or with manifest determination to disclaim its authority, he advanced towards Palmyra at the head of his legions. Ancyra was the first city to submit, and by the help of a traitor citizer, Aurelian was admitted into Tyana,



though not until after an obstinate siege had served to forewarn him of the indomitable spirit of the woman he was about to oppose. It is a noble trait of the generous, though fierce disposition of the Roman, that the traitor, instead of receiving the reward he coveted, was abandoned to the rage of the soldiery. Aware, also, that mildness would facilitate his conquest over a nation whose military prowess would be only stimulated by ferocity, the emperor, by salutary edicts, recalled to Antioch the fugitives who had quitted it at his approach, and so far won over the minds of the Syrian people, as to encounter no further opposition as far as the gates of Emesa.

The fate of the East was decided in two great battles. Undismayed by the name and talents of her opponent, Zenobia well preserved her reputation by the activity with which she levied troops, and opened the magazines and immense repositories of military weapons, her foresight had already provided for the emergency. Generally on horseback, with rapid movement, she passed through the host, the different portions of which her prompt intelligence appropriately assigned. The people caught the martial spirit of their queen, and the economy which had formerly been regarded as penurious, now enabled her to reward merit with lavish liberality. To Zabdas, who had already proved his military talents by the



conquest of Egypt, was committed the execution of her orders, the queen herself commanding in chief. The following is the glowing description given of her appearance by an eloquent and imaginative writer of the day :\* the scene is upon the eve of the first great decisive battle of Antioch, and is supposed to be narrated by a Roman.

“The object that approached us truly seemed rather a moving blaze of light than an armed woman, which the eye and the reason declared it to be, with such gorgeous magnificence was she arrayed. The whole art of the armourer had been exhausted in her appointments. The caparison of her steed, sheathed with burnished gold, and thick studded with precious stones of every various hue, reflected an almost intolerable splendour, as the rays of a hot morning sun fell upon it. She, too, herself, being clothed in armour of polished steel, whose own fiery brightness was doubled by the diamonds,—the only jewels she wore—sown with profusion all over its more prominent parts, could be gazed upon scarcely with more ease than the sun himself, whose beams were given back from it with undiminished glory. In her right hand she held the long slender lance of the cavalry ; over her shoulders hung a quiver well loaded with arrows, while at her side depended a heavy Damascus blade. Her

\* Rev. Wm. Ware.



head was surmounted by a steel helmet, which left her face wholly uncovered, and showed her forehead, shaded by the dark hair, which, while it was the only circumstance that revealed the woman, added to the effect of a countenance unequalled for a marvellous union of feminine beauty, queenly dignity, and masculine power. Sometimes it had been her usage upon such occasions to appear with arms bare, and gloved hands, they were now cased like the rest of the body, in plates of steel."

Her forces were chiefly composed of light archers and of heavy cavalry, and against the latter, the Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian, proved but feeble opponents. The queen's troops soon put them to flight, but becoming engaged in a laborious pursuit, were at length conquered, less by the enemy, than by fatigue. Meanwhile, after the first onset, the light infantry of Palmyra, with exhausted quivers, were unprotected against the swords of those legions, which taken from the Upper Danube, had been severely tried in the campaigns of the Allemanic war. Notwithstanding almost superhuman efforts, the memorable engagement of Antioch terminated, after an obstinate conflict, in the defeat of the queen of the East.

Resolved, nevertheless, to maintain her promised declaration, that "the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same," Zenobia retired upon Emesa,



and employed all her resources in collecting a second army. An engagement ensued, similar in almost every circumstance to the last ; so that finding her powers unequal to raising further forces, she took refuge within the walls of her capital, and prepared to defend it with the vigorous intrepidity, characteristic of the widow of Odenatus..

Her powerful enemy was fully aware of the disadvantages of his own position, and of the immense difficulty of carrying on the siege of a city, rendered almost impregnable by art, and with succours hourly expected ; not to mention the zealous co-operation of the Arab tribes, who every moment, with sudden swiftness, harassed the Roman lines. He therefore offered the most honourable terms of capitulation, which Zenobia, conscious that famine was thinning the Roman legions, rejected, in a letter replete with scorn and eloquence. The tongue, in this instance as in many others, wounded far more deeply than the sword, and Aurelian, exasperated to the utmost, redoubled his efforts to subdue his heroic adversary. The expectations of Zenobia were disappointed by the death of Sapor, king of Persia, from whom she had looked for succour, and hearing that Probus had returned victorious from the conquest of Egypt, she resolved to fly ; less, it is believed, to insure her own safety, than to obtain reinforcements for the capital. She had



already reached the banks of the Euphrates, a distance of sixty miles from Palmyra, owing to the fleetness of her dromedary, when she was overtaken by a party of the emperor's light horse, and brought into the presence of the conqueror.

When contemplating the chances of defeat, Zenobia had often expressed her determination to die like Cleopatra, but like her in another respect, feminine weakness was conspicuous in this hour of peril. Endeavouring at first to propitiate the emperor, who sternly asked how she had presumed to rise in arms against his power, she replied, "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus ; you alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and sovereign." When the soldiers still clamoured for her immediate execution, and she found herself exposed to their tumultuous ferocity, she forgot the intrepidity of Cleopatra, and endeavoured ignominiously to purchase the clemency of Aurelian, by directing his vengeance towards her ministers, to whom she imputed the guilt of her resistance. To this weakness, which we pity, yet, because of the general evanescence of feminine courage, are not astonished to find developed even in such a generous nature as that of Zenobia, was owing the death of her friend and counsellor Longinus, whom she confessed to have been the author, of the exasperating letter of defiance. It



has been observed, that "the fame of this great man, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him." Certain it is, that the calmness of the sufferer, previous to his execution, was no less a great reproach to Zenobia, than an heroic rebuke to the barbarous soldier, whose arms and sway were impotent, before the spirit of true philosophy.

After the plunder of Palmyra, which of course fell a rich prize to the Romans, immediately upon the capture of its queen, Aurelian returned from the conquest of the East, leaving a garrison to command the city. He had already crossed the straits of the Hellespont, when intelligence reached him that the Palmyrenes had massacred the soldiers, and had already renewed hostilities. Exasperated at this fresh affront, Aurelian returned, prepared to take summary vengeance upon the fated city. Its downfall forms a fearful episode in the history of war and carnage; and in a letter of Aurelian himself, he acknowledges that, in the outpouring of this dreadful vengeance, neither age, sex, nor condition, was spared. The innocent perished with the guilty; nor was it until the ravages of the infuriated soldiery had destroyed almost every monument of pristine magnificence, that the emperor paused to regret the excesses of his infatuated violence, and vainly endeavoured



to restore works, which only the minds of those who fell with them could have created. In his repentance, he granted permission to the remnant of the Palmyrenes, to rebuild and reinhabit their city, but his chief regret seems to have been exhibited, at the destruction of the Temple of the Sun. In the silence of death, and amidst the still smouldering embers of magnificent ruin, vainly did he mourn over this masterpiece of human genius, sacrificed to momentary passion! In the midst of falling pinnacles and crashing roofs, its marble shafts and alabaster carvings, appeared too ethereal in their brightness for decay, and fire itself only irradiated their glories with a more transcendant lustre. For a time the burning flood seemed reluctant to approach it, and strangely devoured every temple and edifice around, without daring to profane this sanctuary of art. On a sudden, the flames burst out at the western extremity, and after a time were as suddenly extinguished, — an interval, short yet fatal, sufficing to compass the devastation of ages! When the conflagration was extinct, blackened deformity had superseded beauty, and exquisite proportion was involved in the indistinctness of ruin!

Zenobia was spared the sad spectacle of the city's downfall, but the measure of her suffering was not yet full. Upon his return to Rome, Aurelian deter-



mined to signalize his victories by a triumph, unrivalled in the proudest epoch of the empire, for the vastness of its splendour. Vopiscus describes the spectacle with his usual minuteness. Twenty elephants, four tigers, two hundred most curious animals selected from every region of the empire, were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, doomed, for *amusement*, (!) to the sanguinary conflicts of the amphitheatre. All the riches of the Syrian queen, together with the ensigns of conquered nations, were accompanied by representatives of the eastern monarchs, clothed in their national and variegated costume, and displaying the crowns of gold and other tributary gifts, received from different cities by the emperor. Trains of captives, were compelled to swell the triumphal pageant, from the Goths, Sarmatians, Gauls, Franks, Egyptians, and Syrians ; but two personages alone in this vast assembly divided the public attention with Aurelian ; these were Zenobia, and Tetricus (the usurper of Gaul and Spain). Clothed in her royal robes, with her figure confined by fetters of gold, of such vast weight as to require the assistance of a slave to support them, Zenobia preceded, on foot, not only the magnificent chariot, wherein she had hoped to enter Rome, but also those of Odenatus and the Persian monarch. Vainly did her downcast eye, seek to evade the ferocious gaze, of the exulting masses through which she passed, the



object of vulgar astonishment and rebuke. Vainly, too, did she experience, in her own mind, the resources of that untamed spirit she once essayed to copy, but whose fate, at this hour of her own calamity, perhaps, gave to her sufferings a deeper anguish, when she recollected how momentary weakness had deprived her not only of freedom, but also, according to the heathen idea of heroism, of the glory of evading by death, the bitterness of contumely. The memory of her frequently expressed desire, to claim affinity with Cleopatra, whose heroism she had so admired as even to trace its descent through the lineage of the Macedonian kings of Egypt to herself, now oppressed her with a sense of her own decadence from it; and she reproached herself, not with having proved unequal to avert disgrace, but for having had the pusillanimity to survive it.

Indeed, this latter emotion appears to have induced some authors to state, that she starved herself to death; but we find that these enthusiastic eulogists are not authorized in their account. On the contrary, authentic records prove that she subsequently, with others, shared the clemency of the emperor, who showed her especial marks of favour, and presented her with a villa at Tibur, or Tivoli. In this beautiful retreat she appears to have exchanged greatness for happiness; the Syrian queen became the wife of a



Roman senator, and allied herself, by the marriage of her daughters, to several noble families, so that her race was traced in the person of Zenobius, bishop of Florence, in the fifth century. Of her sons, history presents but slender records, and although the youngest obtained part of the principality of Armenia, yet neither of them appears to have inherited any of the signal qualities, of their parents. Feminine qualifications, if eminent, at all times tend towards excess, and frequently their characteristic impulse prompts to more daring deeds, or more abiding fortitude, than the calmer, yet more sustained energy of man. As a queen, with ambition to instigate, and talents of the highest order to fulfil the designs of that ambition, Zenobia appears before us as almost unrivalled in the magnitude of her qualities, and the insignificance of her imperfections; but the physical constitution of her sex, impeded the action of her lofty spirit, and she who created an empire, and defied Rome, when surrounded by her guards, as a monarch, —fell into servile abjectness, in peril and captivity, because she was a woman !







ELEANOR OF CASTILE.







## Eleanor of Castile.

Born A.D. 1244, died A.D. 1291.

FAMILIAR to our childish ears, is the story of that fair queen and devoted wife, who, accompanying her husband in the dangers of a distant Asiatic campaign, pressed her own bright lips upon the wound inflicted by an assassin's poisoned dagger, and drew the venom thence, risking her life to procure the safety of the one she loved, and whom "no medicines could otherwise" have restored to health. This incident, upon which chiefly rests the claim to heroism, which most of us love to associate, with the name of Eleanor of Castile, is however so indifferently authenticated, as to be rejected by many of our historians, as more romantic, than probable. Should she, therefore, have a place among our heroines? Yes! let us give her the advantage of tradition, let us take the word of her old Spanish eulogist, who (though a countryman of her own) was considered of sufficient weight to obtain the credence of Camden, who quotes thence the anecdote, assured that if



Eleanor did not absolutely save the life of the king by a means so purely heroic, yet that he always "attributed his recovery to herself." Indeed one who, in the words of Walsingham, was "the column and pillar of the whole realm," and to whose "glory," her husband, when he had the grief of losing her, "caused all those famous trophies to be erected," the crosses which marked the pauses of her noble corse on its way to interment, must be fairly entitled, by her character and virtues, to the elevated position our youthful reminiscences assign her, as well as in point of fame, to a place, in the ranks of the Heroines of History.

Moreover Queen Eleanor, universally beloved by the nation of her adoption, that "godly and modest princess, so full of pity, who was ever ready to relieve the distresses of the suffering, and to make those friends who were at discord," must have also had something of the courage of the heroine about her, for she was mated with a man of a fiery temper, second only, as in his achievements in the Holy Land, to his almost immediate predecessor the renowned Cœur de Lion. Of this prince it is related by Walsingham, that once, when out hawking upon a river, he noticed that one of his barons neglected to attend to a falcon, which had just seized a duck among the willows. Calling him to account for the omission, the noble sneeringly



replied, "that it was well for him that the river was between them." This answer so stung the prince, that he plunged into the stream, heedless of its depth, and having with considerable danger reached the other side, pursued the provoking noble with his drawn sword, until, seeing escape hopeless, the latter turned round his horse, flung off his cap, and advancing to Edward, threw himself upon his mercy, and offered his neck to the blow. Disarmed by his submission, the prince sheathed his sword, and rode quietly home with the offender.

To such a prince, so impatient of control, so resentful of opposition, did the little Infanta of Castile pledge her childish faith, when, at the early age of ten years, she stood a bride in Burgos, the capital of that sovereignty, and beheld her bridegroom, a boy of fifteen, receive the honour of knighthood from the hands of her brother, King Alphonso.

This marriage appears to have given universal satisfaction. Preparations, upon a scale of costly magnificence hitherto unheard of, were made to receive her at Bordeaux, where Edward's father, our English Henry the Third, then was ; and in England general hospitality and rejoicings testified the hearty welcome accorded to the future queen by her well-disposed subjects. But it was necessary that the education of the little bride, which had not during these gay doings



progressed very favourably, should be now seriously attended to : and for this purpose, Eleanor set to work in good earnest, while the prince of Wales, her young lord, travelled at home and abroad, perfecting himself in manly arts and accomplishments, and frequenting jousts and tournaments.

In the midst of such scenes, the news of the civil wars in England found the prince, and summoned him to assist his father the king, in the fierce struggle then enacting against the barons. Time, indeed, was it, that Edward should arrive to the rescue ; the rebels had already taken the old king prisoner, and at the field of Evesham he was purposely placed in the van of the battle, and being completely clad in armour, was for some time unrecognised by his friends : receiving a wound, he called out, fearful of his life—" I am Henry of Winchester, your king ;" and fortunately being known by his voice, his son flew to his assistance, and conveyed him to a safe retreat from the danger. After this terrible engagement, the young victor sent to communicate the intelligence, that they might safely return, to his mother and his wife, who had fled for shelter to the court of France. They landed at Dover shortly after, and after the lapse of ten years Edward was reunited, never again voluntarily to absent himself from her side, to the fair mistress of his heart and fortunes.



Eleanor was now in her twentieth year. Her appearance was eminently striking, her countenance lovely and ingenuous, and shaded by a profusion of glossy tresses. These she wore floating in wavy abandonment from beneath her queenly tiara, and setting off, to yet greater advantage, the delicate and beautiful proportions of her throat and shoulders. Upon his part, Edward must have been a model of manly dignity. Of elegant form and majestic stature, he was so tall that few of his people reached his shoulder. His ample forehead and prominent chest added to these advantages, while from the peculiarity of his figure he managed a sword and sat a horse with equal grace and power. A finer or more attractive pair can scarcely be imagined than they were at this time; and the Londoners appeared to think so, for they welcomed them with the most magnificent entertainments; and never failed to greet with acclamation the appearance in public of a prince and princess, whose accession to the throne, then so inefficiently filled, it is probable they would have hastened by every justifiable means.

In her favourite residence of Windsor Castle, Eleanor's heart first learned to bound at the music of her children's voices; a boy and girl were successively given to her embraces, and then another boy—the princes bearing the names of John and Henry, the



princess that of her mother. When, a year or two after, Prince Edward set out to embrace the cause of the Crusaders, the little Prince John was present at the convocation at Westminster. Swearing fealty upon the infant's tiny hand, the barons bound themselves to take him for their king, in the event of his father's and grandfather's demise.

Like Berengaria, the devoted Eleanor insisted upon accompanying her beloved lord to the wars. In vain was it represented to her that her children needed her care ; she would not permit their welfare to be put in competition with that of her husband. Anxious to prevent her departure, and perhaps still more selfishly fearful of the hardships which might attend their own steps if compelled to follow her, the court ladies crowded around her with terrible pictures of the variety of horrors which awaited women in the Holy Land, the cruelty of the infidels, the doubtful nature of the climate—even if a delicate frame were sufficiently inured to fatigue and denial to survive the horrors of a campaign. Her answer was still the same ; all they could say would never alter her determination. In her own memorable words—" Nothing ought to part those whom God had joined — the way from Syria to Heaven was as near, (if not nearer,) as from England, or from her native Castile."

And thus the youthful couple set sail, and bidding



farewell to the two little princes, the sand of whose young lives was destined to run out before their parents should again set foot on English shore, were soon in Sicily, where they proposed to winter. Here endeavours were made to persuade the prince to give up his expedition and return home : his characteristic answer has been preserved.

“ By Heaven, if all should desert me, I would lay siege to Acon, if only attended by Fowen, my groom ! ”

In the spring, Edward and his princess reached Acre, and soon frequent acts of valour revived the glory of the English name in the East, and spread terror in the hearts of the foe.

Dreading the event, the Saracens now endeavoured to get rid of their formidable enemy by assassination. As the prince reclined in his tent one sultry afternoon, a messenger demanded to see him, pretending that he came from the Emir of Joppa, who desired to become a convert to the faith of the Christians. While Edward was engaged in perusing a letter to this effect, the assassin dealt him a blow with a poisoned dagger, but not so quickly as that the object of his attack could not avert the aim from his heart, though in so doing, his arm was slightly wounded. They were alone ; but raising his foot, Edward felled his assailant with a blow on the chest ; they then struggled together, during



which his attendants rushed into the tent, but before they had time to lend any assistance, Edward had despatched his intended murderer.

At first the trifling wound thus inflicted created no anxiety, but in a day or two an unfavourable appearance presented itself, and his attendants were forced to inform the prince, that unless the poisoned matter was removed, his life would be sacrificed. We have already intimated the doubt cast upon Eleanor's intervention to effect this object ; but none exists that, at a juncture most critical, when the fears of those around the invalid were excited with too great reason for his life, she watched untiringly beside his couch ; and when informed of the necessary painful operation, which afforded the only chance of her husband's recovery, she was so distracted by grief at the prospect of his sufferings, that she was obliged to be carried from the chamber, lest the convulsive sobs her anguish betrayed her into, should exercise a prejudicial influence upon him she so dearly loved.

Poor Eleanor ! her firmness entirely forsook her ; she could not control the expression of her emotion ; the very force which was employed to draw her from his side, elicited fresh lamentations upon the part of the tender wife ; but despite her struggles, she was borne from the apartment. " It was better," she was



told, "for her to scream and cry, than that all England should mourn and lament;" and perhaps, when calmness returned, she was able to echo this unpalatable comfort, and confess her weakness had been properly dealt with. The efforts of the leech were successful; but although the immediate danger was arrested, a considerable time elapsed before Edward was completely recovered. During a long period of weakness, and its wayward concomitants, Eleanor displayed the most unremitting care and tenderness. That devotion to her husband, which gained for her the appellation of "the faithful," had now full opportunity for test; and though in delicate health at the time, she never spared herself, in the endeavour to restore him to convalescence. The desired result was accomplished almost simultaneously with the birth of another princess, who was called, from their then residence, "Joanna of Acre." This event was closely followed by the election of one of Edward's companions in the crusade, to the papal throne. Theobald, archbishop of Liege, who had been his tutor, became Pope Gregory X.; and soon after his departure for Rome, the English troops being thinned by illness and want of food, Edward sorrowfully brought his Syrian expedition to a close, and returned to Sicily on the way home.

Here the tidings of the death of their eldest born,



followed by news of that of his brother, and scarcely a day after, of that of the king of England, verified lamentably the old saying about "misfortunes never coming alone;" and the knowledge that he was now a king compensated but poorly for the sorrow of the bereaved father and son. It is recorded that the death of his children made far less impression upon Edward than that of King Henry; but the young mother had no strong ties of filial tenderness with the deceased sovereign, to absorb the grief with which she must have contemplated the untimely fate of her two lovely and promising boys. Heaven, ever merciful and beneficent, allowed her the best consolation she could receive: within a few months another prince was born to her, named Alphonso, after her brother, who bid fair to be a fitting heir to his father's throne.

Twice in his life did a signal intervention of Providence preserve Edward from fatal accident. The first of these occasions was just before he joined the Crusaders, and its influence appears to have given a serious though superstitious tone to his mind. Playing at chess one day at Windsor with one of his knights, "the prince suddenly" (to use the words of a well-known able writer) "rose from his game, without any motive or decided purpose which he could define even to himself,—the next moment the centre stone of



the groined ceiling above him, fell on the very spot where he had been sitting." Upon the second occasion, Eleanor was his companion in the danger, nor was the escape of both less miraculous. Sitting beside her on a couch in their palace at Bordeaux, shortly after the birth of the little Alphonso, "a flash of lightning struck in at the window, passed by them, and killed two persons who were attending upon them." Well might Edward deem himself, after these "hair-breadth escapes," the object of special care from on high.

The arrival of the king and queen was celebrated with great pomp in London. The coronation quickly followed, and for a time all was sunshine and happiness. But while Edward and his queen were absent, taking possession of the states which had accrued to the latter by the demise of the queen of Castile, the unsettled state of the principality of Wales resulted in that war, which ended in a manner familiar to the youngest student in English history.

Merlin, the wizard, whose prophecies had been handed down through a long line of implicit believers, had predicted, it was said, "that a Welsh prince should reign over the whole British domain," and Llewellyn, who had already more than once crossed swords with Edward, appears to have been influenced by these doubtful words in the invasion of England, which he now rashly attempted. He paid the penalty with his



death, and Edward, finding his presence absolutely necessary in Wales, spent a considerable portion of his time there during the next months, finding constant occupation in the subjugation of the independent spirit of the hardy mountaineers. Here was the Princess Isabella born; and Eleanor being again about to become a mother, Edward conducted her to the castle of Caernarvon, which he had recently built and strongly garrisoned, with the view of keeping the insurgents in awe. Fearless of danger, and perfectly satisfied so long as she was permitted to be at the side of her lord, the faithful Eleanor entered Caernarvon Castle by a gate called to this day by her name, and took up her abode in the Eagle Tower. The cradle of her infant is still shown, with its rockers, and rough attempt at ornament; as also the room where the little Prince Edward first saw the light, built in the thickness of the wall, and dreary and wretched-looking enough to do duty for a prison. Eleanor brought into fashion the practice of hanging rough walls with tapestry, but even with such an addition, the poorest domestic servant of the present day, would scarcely envy the queen of England her sorry bedchamber.

When the news reached the king that he was the father of a Welsh prince, the joy with which he received the fortunate realization of his crafty intentions relative to the principality, knew no bounds.



The prediction was now happily accomplished, a sovereign born among them was at hand to be promoted to the vacant power, and when the last lingering obdurations among the Welsh barons came to tender their submission, upon the understanding that he should give them a prince, who was a native of their country, and could speak neither the French nor Saxon tongue, he presented to them the tiny infant, assuring them that the first words he could speak should be Welsh. This promise, those he addressed were fain to receive with the best grace they could evince, and made a virtue of necessity in pledging their allegiance to the babe of the English king ; the principality of Wales was annexed to the crown, and has ever since given its name to the eldest son of our royal family. By the death of Alphonso, the young Edward soon after, became heir to his father's throne : but born to misfortune, the Welsh had little reason to be proud of their prince, though they were always attached to him, and bewailed for a considerable time his miserable end.

After this the queen went to Conway, where she kept state for a lengthened period ; but further additions to her family succeeding, she took up her residence again in the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and reared and educated her daughters in a retired angle of Westminster Hall, called, from the



circumstance of the young ladies' residence there, the "Maiden Hall."

Up to the end of her life—not a long one—Queen Eleanor preserved her place at her husband's side. In the year 1291, matters in Scotland led him thither, and on her way to follow him, though in perfect health at the time of his departure, Eleanor was seized with a dangerous fever in the neighbourhood of Grantham, in Lincolnshire, which proved, within a very short period, fatal. Informed immediately of the illness of his adored consort, the king, though he travelled back with eager haste, yet arrived too late to behold her again alive. Ambition was silent beside the lifeless remains of the beautiful Eleanor; Scotland, though pressing for attention, was forgotten; and Edward, following her corpse for many days during the slow and melancholy funeral marches, remained absorbed in his grief, and wholly regardless of all around him. At the end of every stage, and wherever the bier was in state set down, the king vowed to erect a cross; and to the memory of the *chère reine*, those beautiful monuments of his affection, which are now nearly all lost to us by the fanatical fury of the Puritans, were thus placed, proving in how high estimation she was held by her disconsolate spouse. The abbey of Westminster was also endowed with many rich gifts for dirges and masses, to commemorate



her ; and for years, wax-lights were kept continually burning, around her tomb. The village of Charing, then a suburb of London, took its name from the cross erected to mark the spot where the hearse containing the remains of this "*chère reine*" rested immediately before her interment ; and this name, by which she was nationally known amongst all classes of her husband's subjects, is a signal proof of the pervading influence of unobtrusive virtue, and that the soft breathings of feminine tenderness can reach a people's heart, more permanently, than the fierce tempest of conspicuous but turbulent passion.



## Jane de Montfort.

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Born (about) 1310, died 1362.

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If it be true that great events call forth correspondent abilities, it is no less a reality, that to certain characters, decided adversity presents the congenial, in fact, the vital atmosphere, denied by ordinary circumstances. Opposition is like a magnet to human nature—it attracts all the iron and force of our will ; but it is only in occasional instances that a temperament is encountered, which prefers the storms of fate to a serene sky, and can behold one hope after another shattered and abandoned, yet rise superior to the wreck, resolutely looking onward, to plot and scheme again.

Jane of Flanders (to quote the words of Froissart) possessed “the courage of a man, and the heart of a lion.” One of the most beautiful women of her time, the indomitable energy and courage of her physical endowment were second only to the rare qualifications of her mind. A skilful diplomatist, no covert policy could take her by surprise ; eloquent, the inherent womanly gift of enthusiasm added additional weight



to her words,—results of solid and discriminating thought. “She was above her sex,” says Père Morice (a Benedictine monk and celebrated Breton chronicler), “and yielded to no one in courage or military virtues: no adversity could crush her.”

Comparatively unknown previously, but scanty information subsists respecting Jane’s life up to the time of her husband’s (the Count De Montfort’s) imprisonment and threatened execution. This prince, who had, upon the demise of John, duke of Bretagne, taken possession of the duchy, by prompt and skilful strategy, fell into the hands of his opponent Charles De Blois, through treachery. He was conducted a prisoner to Paris, and shut up in the tower of the Louvre. Thus incarcerated, no obstacle remained to the claims of his rival, who had engaged the sympathies of Philip, king of France, while those of Edward of England had been given, on terms of mutual accommodation, to the Count De Montfort.

But at the moment when all was given up for lost, to the surprise of her own party and the consternation of the adverse one, the countess, recently become a mother, roused herself from the grief into which the captivity of her lord had thrown her, and eagerly undertook the task of supplying to the troops, the general they had lost.

Bearing her babe in her arms, she presented herself



before the assembled inhabitants of Rennes, and in an address, the terms of which history has but scantily left, permitting us to judge of it only by the electric effect it produced, she set forth the claims of the illustrious child, whose father at that moment might have ceased to breathe, and enlisted the hearts of her hearers, in the struggle to support his pretensions. With the arguments natural to such a position,—with appeals which, in that chivalric age, it would have been worse than dishonour to hear unmoved, Jane mingled crafty insinuations respecting the freedom of Brittany, which she represented as likely to be sacrificed by the rival claimant, if successful, to his protector the king of France. From fortress to fortress did this heroic woman journey,—encouraging the wavering,—concerting with the powerful, arranging and scheming for all,—and everywhere with the same success. Finally, having spared no exertion to put her adherents in fair order of defence, she shut herself within the town of Hennebon, and awaited the approach of the hostile troops.

Edward the Third of England had at this time more than one daughter, and although the young heir of Bretagne was their junior, proposals to betroth him to one of them were, in pursuance of the usage of the times, made by the countess, and well received at the English court. The condition upon which this











alliance was sought and accepted, was immediate aid on King Edward's part in the civil war now agitating the entire province of Bretagne. One of the De Clissons arrived in England upon this errand, and a large number of soldiers, including several thousand skilful bowmen, embarked as soon as practicable upon their errand of assistance to the Breton heroine.

Meantime, Charles De Blois arrived with an immense train of adherents at the town of Rennes, to which he laid siege, and in a short time the countess had the mortification of hearing that it had surrendered to its vigorous assailants. Scarcely had these tidings reached her, when they were followed up by the rapid advance of the French army, and Jane found herself speedily blockaded within the walls of her fortress, before which the enemy quietly encamped, evidently bent upon remaining there, till herself and her infant boy should fall into their hands.

This result, however, formed no portion of her prospects. So well organised were her plans, so well disciplined her soldiers, that no advantage, however small, could be gained from without. Riding up and down the streets, the female general, clothed in complete armour, urged bravery and constancy upon her hearers, incited all who could hold a sword to the combat, and summoned even those who could take no martial part, women and children, to the fray,



employing them in hurling stones and missiles upon the besiegers.

It would be difficult to over-rate the effect which this dauntless and personal alacrity produced. "Few men sat a horse better than this princess; in combat she handled the sword with as much address and effect as the most vigorous warriors." Nature, which had endowed her with an elegant form and beautiful features, spoke all the louder in her cause, when it was seen she knew how to forego the privileges and adventitious pleas of her sex, to share the hardships of the meanest trooper, while she assumed the entire responsibility of the camp. Frequent sallies, headed by herself in person, were made; every one followed, where such a captain led the way, and were rewarded with invariable success. On one occasion, having observed that the assailants, entirely occupied elsewhere, had forgotten to guard a distant post, she hurried forth, accompanied by only two hundred horsemen, threw them into disorder, and, after doing great damage to their ranks, set fire to their tents, powder, and baggage. In the enthusiasm of the *sortie*, she had, however, forgotten that she might be unable to return in safety; a considerable force now lay between her little band and the gates of the town; the inhabitants saw her position with unspeakable dread, but a few moments sufficed to arrange her



plans ; she gave the word for her men to disband, and to make the best of their way to Brest. Here she met them at an appointed rendezvous, bringing with her a collected force of five hundred more cavalry soldiers, and, returning at sunrise on the sixth day towards Hennebont, broke through the enemy's ranks, and accomplished her reunion with her disheartened friends (who had mourned her for lost), unhurt, and in great triumph. She was received with every token of rejoicing, trumpets pealed, and acclamations rent the air, disturbing the troops without, who hastily armed themselves, while those inside the town mounted the walls to defend it. The contest lasted until past noon : vast numbers of the besiegers were killed, and their leader at length decided upon retiring to invest the castle of Auray, leaving Sir Hervé de Léon to annoy and vex the garrison, for which purpose he sent twelve large machines to cast stones, by which to destroy the castle.

Contrary winds unfortunately detained the English reinforcements, and after some time, fears were entertained that the besieged town would be forced to surrender. The countess harboured an enemy in the person of the bishop of Léon, who now threw off the mask, and opposed his arguments to hers with the lords, her adherents. Little argument was necessary at this protracted period of fatigue and suspense, to



over-persuade these nobles. Allured by the promise of personal safety, which the bishop was empowered to concede from the leader of the French force, his nephew, and possessing, after all, but a secondary interest in the question, the sad moment had arrived when the countess must behold her whole intentions abandoned, and perhaps be dragged to a prison with the child for whom she was so heroically struggling. The French troops were actually marching to take possession, when the countess, whose eyes had been riveted upon the sea, and who had with despairing energy proclaimed the change of the wind to a quarter favourable to her hopes, rushed from the turret where she had taken her position, with the joyful exclamation,—"I see the succour! I see the English vessels! No capitulation?" Joyously the incarcerated and worn townspeople ran to the ramparts—the good tidings were confirmed—glory again shone upon the invigorated gaze of the lately complaining garrison. The English forces, headed by Sir Walter Manny, entered the town, and were enthusiastically received by the lady and her soldiers, the treacherous bishop having taken himself off. But a large machine arrived shortly afterwards, the result of the information of the ecclesiastic, which, we read, never ceased, night nor day, from casting stones into the city; and this was, perhaps, a more alarming neighbour than even his lordship himself.



Some months after this, and when a truce had been concluded, until the following summer, the Countess de Montfort, accompanied by her son, paid a visit to the English court, where she desired to present him to his future father-in-law, and hoped to arrange some plan for the delivery of her husband from captivity.

Not long, however, did she absent herself from the scene of action. Obtaining further assistance from King Edward, she embarked on her return homewards. On the seas an encounter took place with some hostile ships, which was only put a stop to by a storm separating the two fleets: the countess chose to take her usual conspicuous part in the action, and with "a trusty sharp sword in her hand" combated bravely. Vannes was the first town taken by the friends of the imprisoned duke, and here his intrepid wife entered with great rejoicings; it was, however, shortly after recovered, and the Lord Robert d'Artois, who had been sent to command the English, having been badly wounded, was obliged to be conveyed home.

Enraged at the death of this valiant soldier, which occurred almost immediately upon his arrival in England, King Edward determined to go in person to the assistance of his fair ally. But his presence was productive of no actually favourable results, and his enterprise concluded by a somewhat compromising treaty.

Certain epochs are productive of particular virtues,



and it is more frequent to witness a constellation of rare merit than a solitary star. The Countess de Montfort's example raised two parhelia—the wife of Charles de Blois, who, almost under the same circumstances, and with equal valour, as well as success, took her husband's place later in the war, and our own bright Queen Philippa, so dear to every student of our national annals. During this absence the queen of England, mounted upon her white charger, left that brilliant and spirited picture of womanly energy, which has immortalized it among the most vivid colourings of our youth's favourite gallery of past treasures. Justice obliges us to add, that in her case those impulses of mercy and feminine sensibility which distinguished her character, elevate her far above her Breton kinswoman, upon whose softer attributes, in this direction, history preserves significant silence. The passion for heroism was, however, set, and not content with giving their utmost meed of praise to the Lady de Montfort's conduct, Englishwomen now adopted ornaments in the shape of jewelled daggers to their corsages, and invented a head-dress resembling the warrior's helmet of the opposite sex. These *costumes d'Amazone* were, notwithstanding, soon set aside; having been deemed sufficiently important to attract the censure of the Church itself.

We can scarcely imagine, during the tedious interval



of suspense and anxiety, the sufferings of the unfortunate De Montfort, immured in a hopeless captivity, and possibly in perfect ignorance of the struggles and exploits of his heroic wife. Her active prowess afforded her something like distraction to the grief of separation from her husband ; but the poor prisoner in the Louvre could but brood painfully over his present position and anticipate the worst event. His release had been the first condition stipulated for by the king of England at the time of truce, but the French monarch chose to violate the terms, and keep him a close prisoner.

To the great joy of the countess, and totally without any expectation of such happiness, De Montfort contrived and executed his escape. Disguised as a pedlar, he eluded the vigilance of his enemies, and made the best of his way to the English court. Here, receiving fresh offers of cordiality from King Edward, he tarried only long enough to muster a small force, and hastened to recross the sea, and join the woman who had proved so admirable a mate for his high and noble spirit. But what must have been the agony which this devoted wife endured, after the first raptures on receiving back the object of her constant and unwearied efforts for success ! Captivity and grief had done their work—the fine lineaments of the count were irrevocably tarnished by



disease,—the tenderness of Jane, formerly omnipotent, failed to bring a smile to his wan lip, or a flash to his heavy and languid eye,—the sword had rusted out—and the days of “le bon Jehan,” as his faithful people delighted to term him, were numbered. A few months he lingered—they passed—and the Countess de Montfort stood a widow upon the soil, for the possession of which, she had so long warred. If we may judge of her feelings at that sad moment of her loss, it must have appeared a poor and valueless conquest; yet motive for action still remained in the young son of this spirited pair. Jane de Montfort’s was not a temperament to resign itself to supine and heedless grief. The castle of Tickhill, in Yorkshire, received the bereaved mother and her children, and here she continued to scheme and plot, varying her residence by visits to the English court, and to the shores of France, as seemed most advisable for the interest of the young heir of Bretagne. The Princess Mary of England, betrothed to this prince, was the companion of his childish years, and it is possible that warmer feelings than were usual, in state marriages of the period, grew up between them. The countess (or the Duchess de Bretagne, as she was styled in England) had therefore more than common satisfaction in seeing her son united to his long-affianced bride at Woodstock; but not long were the brilliant auguries and actual happiness



of this marriage, suffered to engage the widow's jaded spirit. In the bright summer-time, when everything was preparing for the majority of the young duke in the following year (which was to herald his departure with his duchess for Brittany, to take possession of his long-contested domain), Mary of England was seized with a disorder, which sapped the springs of life, and consigned her within a few weeks, to an early grave.

Little further remains to be told of the object of our memoir. The Countess de Montfort's chequered and turbulent career, had nothing in store, to force her into that prominent position, that she had occupied in her earlier days. It is probable that, having once held so distinguished a *rôle* in the long contest between France and England, she continued until her death, to take interest, if not an actual share, in the agitating events of the period; but she retired to the Château of Lucinio, near Vannes, where the remainder of her life was spent in comparative quiet. Her son inherited her brave and dauntless spirit, and, as John the "Valiant," is familiar to every reader. He was twice married after the unhappy termination of his first nuptials, and left a numerous progeny to dispute the heritage of their forefathers, and share that fated imprisonment and struggle, apparently inseparable from scions of the royal line of Bretagne.



## Philippa of Hainault.

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Born 1312—Died 1369.

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SATIRISTS of women have been rife in all ages, from the days of Xenarchus the comic poet, who, alluding to the fact that only male grasshoppers chirped, exclaimed, "How happy they were in having dumb wives," down to the time of the misogynists Pope and Swift. Their calumnies against the sex will always however go, with every thinking mind, for exactly what they are worth; but indeed if ever a female character were constituted to disarm criticism and neutralize attack, it appears to have been that of the gentle consort of our third Edward, who bore out fully the poet's sentiment, that

"True self-love and social are the same."

Diffusing happiness not only through the immediate circle which she, like a star, illuminated, but warming with a brilliance as effective as beautiful all within her range, "It was" (to quote Miss Strickland, our clever regal historian) "an infallible result, wherever this great queen directed her attention, that wealth and national prosperity speedily followed." It



appears, indeed, to be generally conceded, that women err upon the side of excess; and granting this to be true, she who could be brave without ferocity, dignified without pride, wise without arrogance, and benevolent without ostentation, possesses claims to the applause and honour of that posterity, by whom her name can never be forgotten while English hearts exist.

The result of policy, and intended to associate an unscrupulous ally with a bad cause, the marriage of Edward and Philippa was fortunate enough to unite two hearts already, at least, mutually interested. Edward chose the young Philippa from a family of fair daughters. Harding quaintly relates the story thus, laying, as we shall see, great stress upon the personal attraction desirable in a queen consort of England: Orleton, the bishop of Hereford, being sent to negotiate with William of Hainault.

“ He sent forth then to Hainault, for a wife,  
A bishop and other lords temporal.  
Among them-selves our lords, for high prudence,  
Of the bishop asked counsel and sentence,  
‘ Which daughter of the five should be our queen !’  
Who counselled thus with sad avisement,  
‘ We will have her with fairest form I ween.’  
To which they all accorded with one mind,  
And chose Philippe that was full feminine,  
As the wise bishop did determine ;  
But then among them-selves they laughed aye,  
Those lords then said, their bishop judged full sooth  
The beauty of a lady.”



The taste of the clerkman and the prince thus happily concurring, Philippa was married in due form to her royal lover, by procuration, at Valenciennes, and set forth to be personally united to him by a second nuptial, when he should have recrossed the Scottish border. Greeted with tumultuous rejoicing in London, the pomp and magnificence by which Philippa was surrounded, dazzled not only there, but wherever she passed on her journey to York, where her bridegroom, less favoured in point of pecuniary advantages, received her with a train of the flower of English and Scotch *noblesse*. Here they remained until peace with Scotland was finally established, and then took up their residence at the palace of Woodstock, where the young queen lived with little intermission during the next three years. In this beautiful seclusion, the first child of their union, Edward, later known by the surname of the Black Prince, was born. This event, which perhaps for the first time caused the young father of eighteen to realize his position, and throw off the pernicious influence of his mother, that "she-wolf," as she was termed, Isabella of France, and her vile favourites, was closely followed by the king's assertion of his own independence and power. Veiling his designs, under the appearance of contented interest in the pleasures that had been so long contrived by them, to prevent him from that thought, which they



well knew would be their ruin, Edward held a joust in Cheapside, remarkable for its splendid appointments ; but his young wife had, whilst presiding upon the occasion, a perilous accident, which heightened the interest already felt universally in her favour. A gallery, erected for her accommodation and that of her ladies, broke down, and all were precipitated to the ground. Edward's fear, and then anger at the accident, were unbounded, and we read that even at this early period of her married life, the gentle Philippa interceded with her passionate partner, to save the unfortunate mechanic, who had constructed the platform, from his indiscriminating vengeance. After many cogitations with his friend, the prudent Lord Montacute, the decisive blow was struck, to rescue the king from the unworthy trammels which had so long encircled him. On the morning of the 19th of October, 1330, he had a private conference with that nobleman, who then rode away into the country, but in the dead of the night returned privately to Nottingham, where the queen-mother then resided. The cautious Isabella had the keys of the strong castle of that town, laid beneath her pillow, every night, but the governor of the fortress, had been won to favour the design, and by means of a subterraneous passage, Montacute and his companions penetrated beneath the walls, and were joined at the foot of the main tower, by the king, who



led them up a secret staircase, into the chamber next to that, in which Mortimer and his adherents (who had gained word of a plot being in agitation), were consulting. With his usual impulsive passion, Edward illegally, and with scarcely the form of trial, doomed the favourite to death, and the sentence was carried into effect, within a short time after.

King Edward, now wholly his own master, employed his time in a variety of ways, more or less advantageous to himself, and his subjects. Not invariably did his schemes tend, to the improvement of his people,—not always were they intended, to have that ultimatum principally in view. But the queen, who, young as she was, suggested for a good and wholesome purpose, every project to her husband, having procured his co-operation, commenced creating a source of increase to the impoverished coffers of the kingdom, by introducing the manufacture of cloth similar, to that of her native country, and inviting over foreign artisans (at the head of whom was the Flemish cloth-weaver John Kempe), promising them “letters of protection and assistance.” Nor was Philippa, in the midst of her utilitarian designs, unmindful of the state and patronage, as well of chivalry as of the arts and sciences, naturally expected of a lady, occupying her elevated position. She presided at tournaments, and thus won the hearts of her subjects of all



denominations ; and when about the time her infant was twelve months old, the countess of Hainault, her mother, paid her a visit, she profited still more largely from the suggestions of this sensible princess, in the endeavour which appears to have ceaselessly actuated her, in promoting beneficial inventions, and establishing a cordial and frank understanding, amongst the various classes of her realm.

When Edward travelled northwards, to lay siege to Berwick, Philippa accompanied him, and for greater security, was placed in the castle of Bamborough. Here she was attacked, and though fruitlessly, yet it did not less incense the young king to find the enemy had dared to stimulate his wrath, and draw him from his present undertaking, to her assistance, by menacing the person of the queen. Shortly after the capture of Berwick, and her return to Woodstock, the princess royal, Isabella, was born.

An inquiry into the Salique question is needless in this place, and we therefore merely notice, that Edward, by a series of artifices, and a course of temporizing, gained the point his ambition aimed at, and by a wild and unjust claim upon the throne of France, ten years after the accession of Philip of Valois had settled the succession, embroiled the two nations in a long and exhausting war. In 1338, he crossed over to Flanders,



preparatory to the French invasion he meditated ; and in the following year we read of Philippa's crown being pawned for between two and three thousand pounds, to meet the expenses that now came fast upon the impoverished king, who, by the death of his father-in-law, had lost a source of considerable pecuniary assistance.

Philippa for a period, took up her abode at Antwerp and Ghent, and in these cities, two sons were severally born to her, but the fruitless war had so exhausted their finances, that the king and queen of England, were forced to abandon, for a time, the struggle, and, taking ship, arrived, after some vicissitude and considerable peril, at the Tower. An incident occurred, immediately upon their landing, which irritated Edward so greatly, that all his queen's persuasive gentleness, was called into requisition, to restore his equanimity. The constable of the Tower, De la Bèche, had gone to keep an appointment with a lady to whom he was engaged, little expecting the return of his sovereign. As soon as the "cat" had departed, the gambols of the "mice" began ; the wardens and soldiers, "following so good an example," had gone likewise upon various personal errands, and the Lady St. Omer, together with her royal charges, formed the sole guard of honour, to receive and welcome, the returning wanderer. Philippa was



ever successful in her applications; her voice was never raised in vain, her smiles never unheeded, and tranquillity was speedily, by her endeavours, restored. It has been observed by more than one writer, that Edward never fell into excesses, nor committed imprudences, when she was at hand, to restrain and advise. Her influence was constantly exerted upon the side of truth and right, her advocacy always in favour of peace and forbearance.

A well-known talented writer, recently deceased, asserts, that moral and material beauty naturally and invariably go together. If by this, he means that the beauty of expression,—that “best part of beauty,” which, as Lord Bacon says, “a picture cannot express,”—is inseparable from moral excellence, we go with him entirely. An elevated intellect, and a beneficent temperament, have an unmistakable development; nor is it too much to say, that to the most common-place features (speaking in a strict point of physical perfection), are thus imparted charms, which surpass the veriest masterpieces of nature’s choicest, but merely external handiwork. Philippa, whose character appears to have sustained no derogation from the admixture of any selfish or narrow-minded elements, was gifted, by nature, with not only a countenance which was a faithful mirror of the radiant impulses passing within, but



so charming as to attract the admiration, of all who approached her. Her complexion was beautifully clear, her eyes twin wells of limpid lustre, and the soft lines about her mouth ever alternating into curving messengers of tenderness, benevolence, and pity. Notwithstanding these attractions, if the story of the Institution of the Order of the Garter (or rather its revival) is correct, the king's attachment to her would appear to have been, at one time, in considerable danger, namely about the period of the temporary return to England. The story is so quaintly and amusingly ~~narrated~~ by the Hainaulter Froissart, secretary to his queenly countrywoman, that we cannot forbear giving it verbatim, according to Lord Berners' version.

“The countess of Salisbury, who was esteemed one of the most beautiful and virtuous women in England, was in this castle” (Wark, on the Tweed), “which belonged to the earl of Salisbury, who had been taken prisoner with the earl of Suffolk, near Lisle, and was still in prison at the Châtelet in Paris. The king had given him this castle upon his marriage, for his many deeds of valour, and for the services he had received from the said earl, who was formerly called Sir William Montacute, as appears in another part of this book. This countess comforted much those within the castle, and from the sweetness of her looks, and



the charm of being encouraged by such a beautiful lady, one man, in time of need, ought to be worth two,"—a remark in spite of which, matters were going very much against the lady, who was closely besieged by the Scots, when a young relative of her husband, called also Sir William Montacute, volunteered to escape to the king, through the Scottish ranks, to inform him of the peril of the castle, and bring him to its rescue: a project he happily accomplished. "As soon as the lady knew of the king's coming, she set open the gates, and came out so richly beseen, that every man marvelled of her beauty, and could not cease to regard her nobleness, with her great beauty, and the gracious words and countenance that she made. When she came to the king, she kneeled down to the earth, thanking him of his succours, and so led him into the castle to make him cheer and honour, as she that could right well do it. Every man regarded her marvellously; the king himself could not withhold his regarding of her, for he thought that he never saw before, so noble nor so fair a lady: *he was stricken therewith to the heart, with a sparkle of fine love that endured long after*; he thought no lady in the world so worthy to be beloved as she. Thus they entered into the castle, hand in hand, the lady led him first into the hall, and after into the chamber; nobly apparelled. The king regarded so the lady, that



she was abashed ; at last he went to a window to rest him, and so fell into a great study. The lady went about to make cheer, to the lords and knights that were there, and commanded to dress the hall for dinner. When she had all devised and commanded them, then she came to the king with a merry cheer, who was in a great " (brown ?) " study. And she said, ' Dear sir, why do you study so ? for if your grace be not displeased, it appertaineth not to you so to do, rather ye should make good cheer and be joyful, seeing ye have chased away your enemies which durst not abide you : let other men study for the remnant.' Then the king said—' Ah ! dear lady, know for truth, that since I entered into the castle, there is a study come to my mind, so that I cannot choose but to muse, nor I cannot tell what shall fall (or happen) thereof : put it out of my heart I cannot.' ' Ah ! sir,' quoth the lady, ' you ought always to make good cheer, to comfort therewith your people ; God hath aided you so in your business, and hath given you so great graces, that ye be the most devoted and honoured prince in all Christendom ; and if the king of Scots have done you any despite or damage, ye may well amend it when it shall please you, as ye have done divers times, or this. Sir, leave you musing and come into the hall, if it please you ; your dinner is all ready.' ' Ah ! fair lady,' quoth the king, ' other things lieth at my



heart that ye know not of ; but surely your sweet behaving, the perfect wisdom, the good grace, nobleness, and excellent beauty that I see in you, had so sore surprised my heart that I can but love you ; and without your love I am but dead.' Then the lady said—' Ah,' right noble prince, ' for God's sake tempt me not, so noble and gallant a prince as you cannot counsel me to forget my husband, who is so valiant a knight, who has served you faithfully, and who on your account now lies in prison. Certainly, sir, this would not add to your glory, nor would you be the better for it, and if I could be capable of such conduct, it is you that ought to blame me, and wish me to be punished.'

" Therewith the lady departed from the king, and went into the hall to hasten the dinner ; returning again to the king, she brought some of his knights, with her, and said : ' Sir, if it please you to come into the hall, your knights abide for you to wash ; ye have been too long fasting.' Then the king went into the hall and washed, and sat down among his lords, and the lady also.

" The king ate but little, he sat still musing, and as if he durst not cast his eyes upon the lady ; of his sadness his knights had marvel, for he was not accustomed so to be : some thought it was because the Scots were scaped from him. All that day the king



tarried there, and wist not what to do. Sometimes he imagined that honour and truth forbid him to set his heart, in such a case, to disunite such a lady and so true a knight as her husband was, who had always well and truly served him ; on the other part, love so constrained him that the power thereof surmounted honour and truth ; thus the king debated in himself all that day and all that night : in the morning he arose, and dislodged all his host, and drew after the Scots to chase them out of his realm : then he took leave of the lady, saying,—

“ ‘ My dear lady, to Heaven I commend you till I return again, and I entreat that you will think well of what I have said, and have the goodness to give me a different answer.’ ‘ Noble sir,’ replied the countess, ‘ may the Almighty drive from your heart all evil thoughts ; I am and shall ever be ready to do your grace service, consistently with your own honour and mine.’ Therewith the king departed.”

The impression this fair dame—whose heart not even the admiration of the sovereign could draw from its allegiance to her absent husband—had made upon Edward, was a lasting one. In her honour, he proclaimed a festival in the August of 1343, to which he invited the chief nobles of the realm, and their wives, and whither Salisbury, set at liberty by the care of the king, led the fair Catherine, its brightest ornament.



The first chapter of the Order of the Garter was held a short time after ; but while all the other ladies (who at that time accompanied their husbands on these occasions) came, superbly dressed, the countess of Salisbury arrived in the plainest possible costume, not wishing to attract the attention of the king, nor that he should further admire her to the wrong of the universally beloved Lady Philippa.

Hitherto, if the queen had occasionally been the companion of her husband towards the field, she had been at all events provided with a safe asylum, tolerably remote from the scene of action : now her talents as a regent and a general were about to be tested ; she was to collect an army, unassisted by other power or skill, to lead it forth herself, nay more, to stand personally upon the field of conflict, strewed with the dying and the dead. The Countess de Montfort's appeal to the chivalric aid of the English king, had met response. Edward had set out to the assistance of one, who could, on her part, favour the views he had so long entertained, against the French monarchy. The decisive battle of Crecy had followed, noted for the brave achievements of the young Prince of Wales ; and the Scotch took advantage of the king's absence to enter England, and commit some ravages in the North, which Philippa deeply resented, and on the first report hastened to the help of her subjects there.



Again we consult the lively pages of Froissart for a detail of this queenly campaign ; according to him, Philippa “ was very anxious to defend her kingdom, and guard it from all disturbers ; and in order to show she was in earnest about it, came herself to Newcastle-upon-Tyne. Here she took up her residence, to wait for the forces she expected from different parts of the kingdom.” Coming to the place where her army was, she watched it drawn out in four battalions, headed by the archbishops of York and Canterbury, and several other lords, spiritual as well as temporal. Mounted on her white charger, a second Zenobia for the moment, and scarcely inferior to her prototype, in courage and discriminating management, the queen now advanced among them, and entreated them to do their duty well in defending, and fighting manfully, for the honour of their lord and king. She was received enthusiastically, and met with unanimous assurances that they would acquit themselves to the utmost of their power, and as if the king had been personally present. Feeling that she could to no greater degree inflame their ardour, or urge their affection, Philippa now, with feeling, took her leave, commending them “ to the protection of God and St. George.” In a MS. Froissart, of the fifteenth century, exists a picture representing the queen thus haranguing her troops. She is painted addressing



them with great animation : one hand is extended, the other holds the bridle of her palfrey, handsomely caparisoned ; soldiers with swords, archers preparing their bowstrings, and cavalry bearing gonfalons with the arms and insignia of England, and her tutelary patron St. George, are around. A small mound, intended apparently to do duty for a respectable hill, surmounted by three miserable-looking little tea-trees, occupies one side the picture ; on the other is seen Lord Neville's castle, the tall spiral towers of which, bear a strong family resemblance to the head-dress of the queen, composed of a battlement of crown, out of which arises the odious pyramid with its senselessly-attached veil, fashionable amongst the court ladies of that day. Two frightful *dames d'honneur*, whose heads are enveloped in gear of a different description, but even more unbecoming than the queen's, attend her, apparently at a respectful distance, out of earshot.

The battle began at nine, and lasted until noon. The pious Philippa was offering up prayers during the conflict, and her hopes were crowned with success. On learning that it was decided, she again mounted her palfrey, and rode from Newcastle, where she had remained meanwhile, to the field. She was there informed that the king of Scotland had been made prisoner by a squire named Copeland, who had ridden off with his prize. As the queen had gone through



all the fatigue of organizing the victorious army, she resented the "*French leave*," Copeland had taken, in withdrawing his prisoner from her hands. When Edward heard of it, he sent for the squire, and though he pardoned the mistake on account of the latter's valour, he desired him to restore to his liege lady her prisoner of war; accordingly David Bruce was presented by his custodian to the queen, with such handsome excuses, that she was satisfied. The record of this magnanimity (which is as charming, as we feel candour compels us to confess it would be rare, in our sex, under such circumstances), has had considerable doubt cast upon its authenticity, by Boethius, who maintains that Philippa had nothing whatever to do with the generalship of her army, and that Lord Henry Percy commanded in chief, therefore, that the whole story may be a fabrication of the queen's admiring countryman. It has been hitherto, however, pretty generally credited.

After David had been placed in safe custody, the queen, anxious to rejoin her beloved lord, and give him a personal detail of all her manœuvres in her novel position of generalissima and conqueror, sailed for Calais, taking with her their young daughter Isabella, a girl of fourteen, whose betrothal to Louis, earl of Flanders, was accomplished upon her arrival. This favourite scheme of the king's was, nevertheless,



frustrated. All was prepared, the bride's mother "showing great eagerness" (writes the chronicler of the negotiations) about the trousseau and presents, "being anxious to acquit herself on the occasion with honour and generosity ;" but there is reason to suppose that attachment existed elsewhere in the hearts of both the young people, and although Louis pretended satisfaction at the pending arrangements, and was thus, by the queen's desire, permitted to go almost at large, he only awaited a convenient opportunity, which occurred within a very few days of the intended nuptials, to make his escape while out on a hawking-party. Louis was one of the handsomest young men of the day, but the forsaken Isabella does not seem to have worn the willow on his account for a single hour. It is probable that she knew of his intended flight, and with the ardour and romance of a young girl whose heart was interested elsewhere, even assisted him to depart and obtain the hand of Margaret of Brabant, to whom he had been long attached ; the projected overtures for whose hand on the part of the English king for his son, the Black Prince, must have stimulated, to the utmost, his love and jealous anxiety. Isabella kept her secret closely, for so fond of her eldest daughter was Philippa, that they were seldom separated, and it is evident the queen was both disappointed and chagrined when the



*dénouement* took place. Isabella was to have been married in the year 1349 to Bernard d'Albert, but either she changed her mind or became more ambitious, for this second marriage was broken off, and the young lover, who had been devoted to the princess, retired with a bursting heart from the world, and entered a cloister. Ultimately, a third time her nuptials were projected, and at length she became the wife of Ingelram de Courcy, a young hostage, who received his freedom with permission to return to his native land upon espousing her, but who subsequently returned, and was promoted by the king to the vacant earldom of Bedford. But to revert to Philippa.

The siege of Calais had now lasted for a considerable period. Worn out by famine, the unfortunate inhabitants were at length obliged to capitulate, and at first, the English king, provoked by resistance, determined to put those who had principally been the cause of it, to the sword. But he was induced to restrict the numerous list of devoted names, to six of the principal citizens, who, he commanded, should "surrender themselves to death, with ropes round their necks, bareheaded and barefooted, and bearing the keys of the town and castle in their hands." The part that our gentle Queen Philippa played in the well-known drama that ensued, needs no amplification. She imitated Heaven, which asks but



“ Our sorrow for our sins, and then delights  
To pardon erring man. Sweet mercy seems  
Its darling attribute, which limits justice ;  
As if there were degrees in infinite,  
And infinite would rather want perfection  
Than punish to extent.”

Her “ quality of mercy ” dropped like the gentle rain upon the arid soul of Edward, parched with the fever of wrath ; and when Sir Walter Manny and all else, failed in the endeavour to avert the threatened fate of the venerable Eustace de St. Pierre, and his five patriotic companions, the queen, bathed in tears, prostrated herself before her husband, and agitatedly addressed him in these memorable words :—

“ Ah ! gentle sir, since I have crossed the sea with great danger to see you, I have never asked you one favour : now, I most humbly ask you as a gift, for the sake of the Son of the blessed Mary, and for your love to me, that you will be merciful to these six men.”

The king looked at her for some time in silence, then said—

“ Ah ! Philippa, I wish you had been anywhere else than here ; you have entreated in such a manner that I cannot refuse you ; I therefore give them to you to do as you please with them.”

After this, goes on the narrative, “ the queen conducted the six citizens to her apartments, and had the



halters taken from round their necks ; after which she newly clothed them, and after serving them with a plentiful dinner" (an attention, which, after their late lamentable state of starvation, it is to be imagined they appreciated beyond any other), "she presented each with six nobles, and had them escorted out of the camp in safety."

A clever chronicler of this incident, in the present day, says of it, "*se non è vero, è ben trovato* ;" and although Hume, in a special note at the end of his history, and **others**, consider the circumstance altogether problematical, and of the same description with Froissart's other ingenious pieces of embroidery, yet it has grown to be regarded as so much a matter of noble record, that we should be very sorry to hear it seriously invalidated. Two circumstances, in allusion to it, still require some explanation ; the one, the conduct of the king in so speedily forgetting his wrath, as to load St. Pierre, within an incredible short time, with houses, money, and unlimited confidence : the other, that of the queen, who one day prostrates herself in the dust to obtain the life of the six burghesses, and almost upon the next, obtains the confiscation of the houses, belonging to John Daire, (one of them) for her own use. M. Levesque, in his "*France sous les Cinq Premiers Valois*," professes his inability to reconcile these warring statements : that they can be



explained, however, is perhaps certain, and, in fact, the character of Edward was sufficiently impulsive, to warrant any excess of generosity like that alluded to, while the nature of Philippa is too consistently elevated, to admit of her having any, but a good motive, (it might be even securing for his own better advantage the forfeit property of the citizen) in acting as she is represented to have done.

The surrender of Calais took place in the August of 1347, and early in the following year, we find Philippa parting with Joanna, her second daughter, who was about to journey to Castile to become the bride of its heir, Pedro, afterwards called "the Cruel." This hapless princess, spoken of by King Edward as "Joanna his dearest daughter," was distinguished, notwithstanding her youth, "by gravity of manners, and by the comeliness of fitting grace, and was the especial favourite of her mother." Her nuptial preparations were of the most gorgeous description ; a minute list of them still exists in the Queen's Remembrancer Office, and amongst them are enumerated, the priestly vestments of her chaplains, of cloth of gold, embroidered with *serpents* and *dragons*, on a blue ground ; a bed of Tripoli silk, wrought with dragons in combat, surrounded by a border of vine-leaves, and tapestries embroidered in worsted, with popinjays, roses, and other flowers. Two of her robes, bore devices of wild



men and beasts. Somewhat an extraordinary taste was evinced in all these matters, but we rejoice to find her intended marriage costume, was something more like civilized, not to say feminine, arrangement. A splendored robe of cloth of gold, furnished with a mantle and tunic separate, to be exchanged later in the auspicious day, for an evening dress, as it would now be termed, made according to the Castilian fashion, was destined to envelop the beautiful form of the young bride. She may have worn it in her coffin, for the tragedy, of which she was the heroine, was run out, before the church had solemnized nuptials of probably equivocal happiness. Before she had even seen her bridegroom, the pestilence, known by the name of the "Black Death," invaded Bordeaux, and though the princess was hastily removed to Loremo, a village in the vicinity, its fatal steps pursued her, its first victim, and folded her in an embrace far more fitting and happier for her youthful graces, than would have been that of the future treacherous tyrant, her Castilian lover.

Deeply did Philippa deplore the loss of her child, nor was it the last occasion for her sorrow over a similar event. Happily, however, this was at the time hidden from her, among the secrets of futurity, and time with his soft touch, led her at length, to think of other subjects, and project fresh plans of happiness and



utility. Through her instrumentality, new manufactures and trades brought a restored competency to the purses of her impoverished subjects. She held a tournament at Norwich in the year 1350, accompanied by the Black Prince. This city it was, that her first efforts had benefited, and she seems always to have entertained a strong regard, for its welfare.

The battle of Poitiers, is the next grand public event to be recorded. When the Black Prince brought his prisoner, King John, to London, the king of England received the fallen monarch with all the honours due to a crowned head (a proceeding strange in the man who aspired to the succession, and whose pretensions, if they were well founded, stigmatized John as a rebel and usurper) ; but it was to his mother that the brave young Edward presented his captive, nor could aught exceed the magnanimity and delicacy which Philippa, as her wont, displayed upon the occasion.

She frequently visited the exile, consoling him to the extent of her ability, and after a time, "he and all his household were removed from the palace of the Savoy to Windsor Castle, originally built by King Edward, where he was permitted to hunt and hawk, and take what other diversions he pleased, in that neighbourhood, as well as the Lord Philip, his son." The Black Prince's marriage was about this time solemnized with



the beautiful young widow, Joanna, called "familiarily and endearingly, the fair maid of Kent," his second cousin, and for years the object of his undeviating attachment. Queen Philippa withdrew an opposition to the marriage, which is supposed to have been somewhat justly founded, being possibly unable to refuse anything to the hero of Poitiers. Later, King John, who had returned to his native country after the pacification, to arrange the payment of his ransom, returned to England, finding himself unable to carry out his intentions, and redeeming his parole set his hostages at liberty, apparently happy to rejoin the king and queen at Eltham, and content to return to his old quarters in the Savoy, where shortly after he died.

We now draw towards the close of our narrative. Philippa's earthly course was about to terminate, her path of virtuous excellence had been fully trodden. The deaths of her two young daughters, Mary and Margaret, both recently betrothed, and within a short interval of each other, were but the prologue to a still sadder drama, the queen's demise, which took place a few years after. "The most gentle queen, most liberal, and most courteous," says the grateful Froissart, "that ever was queen in her days, the fair lady Philippa, fell sick in the castle of Windsor, the which sickness continued on her so long, that *there was no*



*remedy but death.* When she perceived her end approaching, she desired to speak with the king, her husband, and extending her right hand from under the bedclothes, put it into the right hand of the king, who was very sorrowful." We give the dialogue that ensued entire : it serves to illustrate completely her consistent characteristics.

" 'We have,' said the queen, 'enjoyed our union in happiness, peace, and prosperity. Now I am about to depart, and I entreat of you that in this our separation, you will grant me three requests.'

"The king, with sighs and tears, replied, 'Ask, my Philippa : whatever you request, shall be granted.'

" 'I beg you, then,' she returned, 'to acquit me of whatever engagements I may have entered into formerly, with merchants for their wares, on this side the sea or beyond, and that you will cause them to be paid everything I owe to them, or to any other. Secondly, I beseech you fulfil whatever legacies or gifts, I may have made or left, to churches here, or on the continent, where I have offered up my prayers, as well as all I have willed, to those in my service. Thirdly, I entreat that when it shall please God, to call you hence, you will not choose any other sepulchre but mine, and that you will lie by my side, in the cloisters of Westminster.'



"The king, all weeping, made answer,—‘My wife ! I grant all ; your desires shall be fulfilled.’

"Then the good lady, and queen, made the sign of the cross upon her breast, and commended her youngest son, who was the only one present, and the king, her husband, to God. And anon, after she yielded up her spirit, the which, I believe, surely the holy angels received with great joy up to heaven, for in all her life, she did, neither in thought nor deed, anything which could endanger her losing it. Thus died this queen of England, in the year of grace 1369, the vigil of the Assumption of the Virgin, the 15th of August."

Without concurring in the impossible perfection thus attributed to her, the history of Philippa may be safely studied as a model and example. Her end was worthy of the blameless life (we speak relatively, for in the sight of God, who is pure ?) it crowned. Surrounded by war and tumult, she had ever wreathed her brows with the olive ; perpetually opposed to vehemence and passion, she constantly supplied the necessary balance in favour of mercy and patience, without ever invalidating her subsequent advantageous influence over the king's mind, by momentary weakness, terror, or an approach to rupture. Resolute at the call of duty, her own disposition affected the milder virtues, at the same time totally removed from placid



insensibility, or unintellectual indolence. Like the rainbow in the cloud, she was ever the bright augury of the sun of peace beaming even through a nation's tears, and changed the impetuous torrents of her husband's temper, into the showers of her own beneficent goodness, beneath which an exhausted people arose refreshed, to the blessings of a sweet, though, alas ! but evanescent, tranquillity. Her death told, by the loss it inflicted, the greatness of those blessings, her life had dispensed through all classes of her husband's subjects, who, even in that dread season of war and anarchy, merged private grief and individual sorrow, in an universal tribute of public mourning, for what all considered, as a common desolation !



## Joan d'Arc.

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Born 1402, died 1431.

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FANATICISM, like its sister Insanity, at once exciting impulse, and discarding rational discipline, prompts to deeds as terrible in their energy, as unfounded upon temperate principle. Who has not wondered at the wild daring with which enthusiasm rushes upon almost certain death, reckless of results, impelled by some vague yet coercing notion, which either has started unbidden from the abysses of "a mind diseased," or which that mind itself has evoked into existence as another Frankenstein, to experience from it a predominant authority—an influence more potent than its own? Ever we require moral discipline to hold the mind in equipoise, for it is one of the strange concomitants of our being, that we cannot long hold converse with one idea without elevating it to an undue pre-eminence; and if we would possess the heart with any impression, however futile and absurd, we have only to entertain the latter frequently,



and the tiny seed of singular conception soon becomes the gigantic plant, overshadowing the entire soul. This is the meaning, as it is the cause of monomania ; hence, also, it results, that superstition (aptly called "the religion of weak minds,") has frequently been, according to the remark of Lucretius, "the parent of impious and flagitious deeds." If, therefore, we find it investing female sensibility with preternatural daring, yet at the same time not extinguishing latent tenderness and womanly humanity, while we are astonished at the vastness of its action, we admire the innate excellence of that temperament which, lashed into turbulence by the zeal, still retains sufficient self-government to resist the excesses, of fanaticism. Above all, as this tendency to yield to imagination is ever present, so there are certain conformations of temperament and combinations of circumstances which peculiarly affect this predisposition ; and thus we find in the history of "La Pucelle," cogent motive, on the one hand, from her mental constitution, and the occurrences of the period, to prompt this religious fever, and on the other, in the imbecility of the monarch, and the discontent and sufferings of a harassed and ignorant people, eagerly to take advantage of it. The strange and eventful career of Joan is too generally, as well as fully known, to need minute recapitulation : it is, therefore, merely necessary to



select such authentic information respecting her, from the various sources extant, as may most clearly develop her characteristics, and their successful exercise.

For once, nature went hand in hand with circumstance, and the one agreed to foster peculiarities, which the other had created. Joan d'Arc, a peasant, illiterate and credulous, was fated to attain, for at least a space, the high appellations of patriot and liberator, and to create brilliant reputation for intrepidity and religious fervour, combined with faithful and unselfish loyalty, in all ages.

Born of humble parents, Joan, one of a family of five, was early taught to share the necessary labours of the household, and render herself capable of gaining a livelihood, when she should no longer find support from home. James and Isabel d'Arc possessed a little farm, and brought up their children in habits of industry; teaching their boys to tend cattle, to run races, fight boldly with lads of their own age, ride rough steeds, and tilt against trees; and their girls to share most of these employments, while in addition, they plied the distaff. But something beyond this education was given to their offspring by these good people. Themselves of strict, though unostentatious piety, they appear to have exceeded the rest of a district remarkable for simple devotion, and early inculcated into the mind of Joan a fervent piety,



mixed, unfortunately for her, with an implicit and universal belief not only in visions, but also of supernatural appearances. These lessons found a quick response in the little girl's breast: she was early noted for the avidity with which she received, and endeavoured to act upon, religious instruction. Reverencing the holy lives of the saints and martyrs, admiring with her whole soul, their sufferings, and aspiring to be admitted to their community, she believed with all the intensity of ignorance, every legend detailed to her, and brooded deeply in a solitude, which, disturbed only by the flocks she tended, she sought at frequent intervals for the indulgence of her dreams.

France at this period, formed the theatre of horror and devastation, the recital of which even penetrated to this remote spot. The traveller brought, from time to time, news of the murders enacted within the limits of the court; of the injustice, crime, and discord which pervaded all ranks; and of the cruel war which was transforming the fertile plains of his country, into one uniform tract of ruin and desolation. Occasionally, bands of infuriated soldiers invaded the quiet marshes of Lorraine (in which the birthplace of our heroine, Domremy, was situate), carrying destruction amidst the humble possessions of the peasantry; and so great was the commotion, so high



did even here the spirit of faction run, that the very children emulated their elders, and pelted each other with stones in the defence of a name. Nothing, indeed, could be more hopeless than the present crisis.

Charles VI. of France, surnamed the "Well-beloved," the most unfortunate prince of the House of Valois, was thrown into a state of mental aberration from the following singular circumstance. Being recently recovered from a serious illness, he was, in the sultry autumn-time, travelling through the forest of Mans, when suddenly there rushed from a wood a strangely-clad and savage-looking person, who, seizing the king's bridle, called out in a harsh voice, "King, king, ride no further forward, but return ; you are betrayed !" Believing him a madman, the attendants permitted him to escape, while they centred all their observation upon the king ; and no circumstances ever threw further light upon this mysterious occurrence. During the whole time they were releasing the horse's bridle previous to his vague monitor's disappearance, the king had been silent, but his features worked convulsively, and his frame was palsied with agitation. The forest traversed, the royal escort availed itself of different paths, upon reaching the sandy plain beyond, to avoid the intolerable dust. The king followed, accompanied only by two young pages, who, fatigued with a



hasty and toilsome march, nodded in their saddles. Thus dozing, one had the misfortune to let the lance he carried, fall with a sharp clash upon the casque of his companion, who was in advance. Imagining himself again accosted by the wild object of his previous alarm, the king, now in a perfect frenzy, drew his sword, and exclaiming, "Forward! advance upon the traitors!" struck at all who came near him, even threatening his brother, the duke of Orleans, and was only disarmed with considerable difficulty. Poison, magic, and various other causes were assigned for the king's malady, which after this day grew gradually worse; fluctuating however, until another accident, which had nearly cost him his life, confirmed his aberration, and rendered fully necessary the precautions which had been previously taken, respecting the succession and regency. The king, anxious to disguise himself at a masque, given in honour of the marriage of one of the queen's maids of honour, assumed, with five other nobles, the appearance of wild men, dressed in cloth covered with pitch, and chained together. The duke of Orleans, being desirous of discovering their identity, approached too near them, with a torch, which involuntarily set them in flames. Four of the five died of the wounds the fire produced, and the other saved himself with difficulty, by plunging into a large vessel of



water. The poor king was covered by the Duchesse de Berri with a mantle, which prevented much bodily injury, but the effect upon his mind was speedily apparent: he forgot everything, even to his own name; denied his royal station; and was alternately plunged in the most hopeless depression, or excited to vehement fury.

The incapacity of Charles produced results usual in such cases. Those who had at first been friends, became later, conspirators. Relatives and strangers, admirers and enemies, alike grew suddenly cognizant of one thing only, their own aggrandizement, as favoured or opposed by alternate events; while the malady of the sovereign was at the same time the excuse and the complaint, of all bodies in the state. To the misfortunes of a country, thus distracted by intestine tumult, Henry the Fifth of England added that of a foreign usurpation. The battle of Agincourt was followed by the ostensible union of the two kingdoms, by means of the marriage of Henry to the Princess Catharine; but within a few months, the young king of England, struck down in the prime of life and hope, and the poor worn-out frame of the monarch of France, were almost at the same moment interred, though not with them the troubles of the last few years, which, with an accumulated interest of national disorder, formed the heritage of the dauphin, now pro-



claimed by scarcely more than his own body-guard—Charles VII. of France.

It was then at the crisis when the English troops closely besieged Orleans, the last stronghold of the young king's power, and when his affairs were at the very lowest ebb, that Charles was informed one day the deliverer of France was at hand, and only waited permission to be admitted to his presence; and that this deliverer was neither "prince, warrior, nor statesman," only a poor peasant girl—Joan d'Arc!

At the late king's death, our heroine was only thirteen years old. She had never learned to read or write; her whole instruction had been limited to the knowledge of the Lord's Prayer and the Creed. Five or six years passed, during which time she did not add further to her attainments; the Bible was a sealed book to the people, but Joan applied undoubtingly the Gospel promise, that everything she prayed for fervently, should come to pass. As the time went by, she grew still more earnest in meditation and pious attendance at church. A little companion, three years her junior, speaking of her in after years, evidenced thus: "Ever ready to attend church and other holy places, she constantly confessed, and used to blush when told she was too devout." Others testified to her liberal and unselfish assistance to those poorer than herself. It was not unusual for her to



pass whole nights in prayer, and gradually these resulted, from fatigue and watching, in visions; which, though in the first instance but simple dreams, produced by the subjects which so constantly occupied her waking thoughts, at length assumed to her excited imagination, the appearance of actual revelations from on high. Once, while her flocks were grazing, she entered, to avoid a heavy shower, a small ruined chapel, where she fell asleep. A strong light appeared to pervade the place, supernatural voices floated around her, and she dreamed that amidst a host of angelic shapes, one, distinguished by a glory of flame, and a voice of graceful melody, thus addressed her, declaring himself, St. Michael.

“Joan, you are destined to become the preserver of your country! Go to the aid of King Charles; seek M. De Baudricourt, captain of Vaucouleurs, and he will conduct you to the king. Go, and fear not; place implicit confidence in me. St. Margaret and St. Catharine will aid you on your journey.”

These apparitions, after this time, frequently recurred to the excited fancy of Joan, and each time, “her voices,” as she termed them, always spoke to the same purpose. At length, her parents, at first sceptical, were induced to regard her assumed mission with more interest; but they urged upon her the absurdity of attempting to convince the rough soldiery, and declared, that if she incurred their resent-



ment by so doing, her father would drown her with his own hands. Notwithstanding these threats, they feared that she would, in some fit of enthusiasm, leave them, and watched her closely, taking her occasionally to Neuchateau, whenever any troops were passing near Domremy. But at Neuchateau the young enthusiast found an unexpected ally. Her uncle, Durant Lappart, was wrought upon by her persuasions to accompany her to Captain Baudricourt, at Vaucouleurs, to tell him her visions, declare her presumed mission, and to beg him to communicate to the dauphin the warning not to attack his enemies at the present time, for that "towards the middle of Lent, God would send him assistance."

Joan met with a poor reception at Vaucouleurs; Baudricourt blamed the uncle for bringing him such an absurd applicant, affected to believe her insane, and desired she might be sent back to her parents. But, nothing daunted, she remained some time at Vaucouleurs, lodging in the house of "Henri, a wheelwright," to whose wife she said, after this unsuccessful application: "I would much rather have remained in my former humble station than come here; it is the will of God, however, and must be obeyed."

Report now lent its aid to poor Joan's apparently wild projects. Her story gained the popular notice,



and the inhabitants of Orleans, glad to catch at even a straw of hope, to escape from the horrors of siege and famine, anticipated, with impatience, the time when her pretensions should be entertained, and her aid secured. Charles, duke of Lorraine, at length heard of her, and curious to see the object of his people's wonder and admiration, forwarded her a passport to the court he held at Nanci. On her arrival, he questioned her fully, and received for answer that no one but herself would be permitted to succour her country. She entreated him to send his son-in-law (René d'Anjou) with her to the dauphin ; but though he appears to have paid considerable attention to her suggestions, he parted with her without further encouragement, than the present of a few francs, which she immediately transmitted to her parents.

Again accompanied by her uncle, Joan now presented herself before Baudricourt, but with no better success. Shortly after, news was brought of the signal failure of an attempt upon the part of the French to supply the besieged town of Orleans with provisions, and unable to restrain her tears at an account of the calamity, she exclaimed, "Alas, all is over then, with my sovereign and my native land ! Our towns are daily seized ; the dauphin loses the last of those domains which his ancestors possessed. And yet, if I could but gain a hearing, it is in my



power to retrieve the fortunes of all my bleeding countrymen, and restore my prince to his throne. No ! I can no longer remain inactive ; I will not see my native France, further become a prey, to the desolating foreigner."

So once more Baudricourt received his persevering visitor, and this time—perhaps tired out like the unjust judge in the parable, or it may be from a tardy conviction induced by the opinion of others—he listened patiently to her ; and being confirmed in his belief, as well by the opinion of the *curé* of the place, who attempted (it is needless to say without avail) to exorcise her as an evil spirit, as by the information she gave him of another defeat at Orleans, which happened to turn out correct, he decided upon sending her to the king. And now all appeared inclined to prosper. The people of Vaucouleurs volunteered to furnish her with the money for her equipment ; they provided her with a horse, and a suit of boy's clothes, a costume she herself preferred for her journey. Two young gentlemen took a vow to attend her in safety to her destination—John de Novalempont and Bertrand de Polengi—and she set forth without informing her parents, lest they should frustrate her schemes : but leaving a letter to implore their forgiveness. Baudricourt seemed, up to the last, not to have entertained any very sanguine prognostications of her



success, for on parting he made use of the words, "Go ! whatever may come of it."

It was the month of February : the heroic girl had to traverse a rough and perilous road ; the English occupied all the adjacent towns, and she was forced to make constant *détours* to avoid them. More than once her companions, in order to test her resolution, tried to alarm her on the road, by calling out that danger was approaching. She replied invariably, " Fear nothing, we shall arrive safely at Chinon, and shall meet with an excellent reception." It was afterwards believed that they would, on one occasion, have deserted—perhaps murdered—her, but that her piety, and good faith, prevented the evil, and transformed them into her fast friends. Ever charitable, her scanty resources were shared with any unfortunate who came in her path ; she stopped wherever she could stay her progress, to attend mass, and at length reached Fierbois, in Touraine, in perfect safety, where she remained to pay her acknowledgments to her patroness, Saint Catharine, instructing her escort to send forward the letter of Baudricourt, to the king.

Charles was at this time with his court at the Château of Chinon. Two days were spent in deliberation upon the receipt of Joan's credentials, and at the end of that period she received the joyful intelligence, that she might present herself before him on the evening



of the third. Amidst a glittering throng, the Count Vendôme pointed out to her, one, whom he proclaimed her sovereign. The rooms were brilliantly lighted ; he who was indicated was dressed in royal costume ; but Joan, hurriedly glancing around, singled out another of no extraordinary pretension, and prostrated herself at his feet. She was right, it was Charles VII. whom she addressed in the following words :—

“ Gentle dauphin ! I am Joan the maid ; I come commissioned to drive away your enemies, to conduct you to Rheims, and there to present to you the crown of France, your right. It is the will of Heaven that the English should depart to their own country, and leave you at peace, in yours.”

Charles now questioned her for some time in private ; it is pretended she informed him that revelations had been made to her of a secret, known only to himself ; also that she described a particular sword, kept in the church of St. Catharine, at Fierbois, without having previously seen it, demanding it as the instrument of her future victories. Whether her auditor believed her tale or not, he was glad to make use of her assistance to reanimate his desponding followers. But to give full effect to her pretended powers, he convened an assembly of learned ecclesiastics and others, who, affecting to disbelieve her at first, after due investigation, at length pronounced



them valid. Joan is recorded to have uttered a retort, when addressed by one of these learned doctors, Friar Seguin. Interrogating her more harshly than the rest, in a very gruff tone, he inquired: "And what language do your voices speak?" "A pleasanter one than yours," was her answer. "But if God wishes and intends to deliver France from her enemies, where is the use of our fighting?" said another; "Let us fight," replied the heroine; "the help will come while we are fighting. Nor need you ask me for a sign. Be assured a sign will be given you, and that sign will be the raising of the siege of Orleans." Joan fully believed the truth of the adage—"Aide-toi, et Dieu t'aidera."

Armed *cap-a-pie*, and mounted on a snow-white steed, a *panache blanc* waving from her helmet, she was now exhibited to the people. She managed her reins with grace and power, kept a firm seat, and showed she could wield a lance with vigorous ease. It was settled that she should be adopted as "the forlorn hope of France."

Placed at the head of the troops; a consecrated banner sprinkled with *fleurs-de-lis*, the work of herself, waving in her hand; a body of ecclesiastics attending her, she marched with 10,000 men under her orders to the assistance of Orleans. All the arrangements of the fair general were characterized by piety and decorum.



She permitted none to join her ranks, who were leading a profane or disorderly life, eloquently haranguing her troops one moment, in the character of leader; or charming them by a maidenly reserve, the next, in her own. Assured of victory, many flocked to her standard, and believed her under the especial protection of the Deity.

At the end of April, 1429, after coming within sight of the enemy's forts, and past their lines, Joan, attended by "the brave Dunois," and escorted by a band of warriors and nobles, entered Orleans, and was received as the saviour of the garrison. "The maid is come! the maid is come!" they cried, and so far had her fame already reached, so much credence had the popular notion obtained even now, that the shout struck terror and dismay into the hearts of the English troops. In triumph she was conducted to church, where *Te Deum* was sung, afterwards a lady of Orleans offered her an asylum in her house, at which a splendid entertainment was provided. Joan's simple habits, however, were still adhered to by her; she partook only of a little wine, and a slice of bread.

Previous to this effective entrance of our heroine into the besieged city, its opponents had received at her suggestion, a letter, which has been frequently copied. She followed up this strange missive by still more active measures. Mounting the walls,



she addressed the English, and bade them, in prophetic terms, "to begone out of France, or woe and shame would befall them." Shortly after, a reinforcement arriving, she headed her troops, and made a successful sortie to assist it to enter. The strange appearance of a woman under such circumstances, the prevalent belief that she derived power from supernatural agency either for good or evil, protected the Maid; not a single opposing hand was raised to impede her progress. On the evening of the same day, Joan, who had thrown herself fatigued upon her couch, suddenly started up, and called hastily for her arms. "This is very ill done," she kept repeating to herself.—"Every one is asleep!" was the reply from one of her attendants.—"What is ill done?"—"My voices!" she exclaimed, "I have heard them again; a moment since the words awaked me, and I am commanded to set out this very hour." Hastily arming herself, she hurried from her chamber, mounted her horse, and spurred him to the "bastide of Saint Loup," where actually a skirmish was raging, though supposed to be unknown to her. The heart of Joan, truly feminine in its sympathies, melted into tears as she encountered the litters of the wounded bearing them back from the fray. "Never, alas!" she said, "can I see French blood, but my hair stands on end." Irritated by the injury done to her



countrymen, she arrived in a few moments in the midst of the conflict, her battleaxe in one hand, her banner unfurled in the other. At sight of her, one prolonged shout of joy arose; the opposing ranks gave way, and sustained a considerable loss, which a day or two after was increased by the assault of the "Maid" upon another of the bastides, to which she crossed by water, passing the whole night upon the river's bank. These successes were followed by others; and though, more than once, Joan experienced the fortune of war, receiving on one occasion a wound in her foot, and in the other an arrow, which, penetrating her neck, stretched her for dead just as she had herself planted a scaling-ladder, and reached the battlements, the English, who had believed her killed, saw her again appear at the head of her men, urging them on to still bolder deeds. Numbers were sadly against the possessors of the bridge, after a dreadful carnage, the English captain and his knights were all overpowered notwithstanding a valiant resistance, and the same evening she entered the city by this bridge, which had long remained a closed passage. A council of war was held in the English camp, and it was decided the siege should be raised. At day-dawn they broke up their encampments, and failing to tempt the Orleannois from their city to a last parting engagement, they marched on the road to Paris, with



colours flying, and drums beating, but not to retreat far. Trusting to reinforcements from the duke of Bedford, the English general shut himself in Jergeau, only a few miles from Orleans. Joan, on her part—after paying a visit to King Charles, who had quietly kept out of the way, while she was fighting like a second Bellona in his service—advanced to attack that place ; and though she had again a narrow escape of her life, being struck on the head by a large stone, and precipitated into the ditch, the earl of Suffolk was made prisoner, and the white banner of the “ Pucelle ” waved again triumphant.

Next followed the battle of Patay, fought in accordance with her instructions ; immediately after which the Maid of Orleans (as she was now generally called) sought the king, and throwing herself at his feet, implored him to visit Rheims, there to be crowned in the sight of his subjects. It is said, she urged as a reason for immediate departure, that she should die within a year. “ I shall be with you but a few months,” she said to him ; “ oh ! let them be well employed ! ” It is possible she may have had grounded presentiments as to her final success, or the probable gratitude of Charles—at all events, the words carried conviction, and he consented. At the head of 12,000 men he began his march ; Troyes opened its gates to him, Chalons followed its example ; and on



the evening of the 15th of July, 1429, Charles made a solemn entrance into Rheims. At the coronation, Joan, bearing aloft her white banner, stood beside him; and at its close she threw herself, weeping, at his feet, thus setting the example of that display of allegiance, which was so spontaneous and unanimous, that though not a single peer of France was present on the occasion, it had wholly the air of a national celebration.

After this event, which Joan regarded as the accomplishment of her mission, she accompanied the king, much against her inclination, towards Paris, whither he marched, resolving not to part with her so long as her name and influence could profit his cause. The sweetness of the poor girl's temper, her dislike to the employment of all violence, when it could by any possibility be avoided—and most of all, her earnest desire to return to her native village, to her father and mother, and even to the care of those flocks, which she had abandoned only at the appeal of, what she deemed, an angelic voice—these interested the hearts of many; but the French captains treated her with coldness and ill-humour, tired of hearing every success attributed not to the chivalry of their country, but to the influence of their feminine ally. On the other side, the duke of Bedford, stigmatizing her as “a limb of the devil,” saw with delight that the superstitious



dread of her name was wearing out in the hearts of his men, now familiarized with her appearance : and an accident which happened to the miraculous sword of Fierbois, and caused it to break in her hand, augmented the decline of her influence, upon the minds alike of friends and foes. If a failure occurred, all were now anxious to throw the blame upon Joan : “ You are a false prophetess,” they cried ; “ did you not promise us that we should sleep this night in Paris ? ” “ And so you would,” was her answer, “ if you had fought as I fought.” No one better than herself, perceived her failing power, and going to the abbey, she hung up, (in token of retreat from all further action) her suit of white armour, before the shrine of St. Denis. A second time, with increased eloquence, she supplicated Charles to dismiss her : but without effect. She received the distinction of ennoblement, and the privilege of using armorial bearings for herself and family, both in the male and female line ; her name was changed from D’Arc to Du Lys, and her native village was rendered, for her sake, perpetually exempt from taxes ; but the happiness of returning to its well-known scenes, to her dear relatives, was denied the yearning heart of the poor “ Pucelle.” She had received a severe wound, caused by the bolt from a cross-bow, when forcing the Porte St. Honoré, and with difficulty had been removed alive, by the Duke



d'Alençon on that occasion from the field ; but she now exerted herself, to gain strength for fresh services, and after some unimportant skirmishes, marched to the relief of Compiègne, and succeeded in forcing her way into that town, at the head of a considerable reinforcement. On the same day, however, after having issued forth with a body of soldiers, in the endeavour to follow up the revived auguries of good fortune, her appearance had excited, by a decisive advantage ; the purple dress she wore, and the snowy standard borne aloft, formed too conspicuous a mark to the opposing force, and shut off from her friends, she found herself surrounded by a crowd of Burgundians, who vied with the English soldiers, in the endeavour to secure the honour, of seizing her person. The presence of mind and intrepidity of Joan forsook her not in this trying moment ; hunted, she turned, a lioness at bay, and performed feats of unequalled valour ; but finding no resource left to her but flight, she was about to spur her horse from the field, when an archer of Picardy dragged her to the earth, and, disarming her, she was immediately surrounded by a strong guard. No attempt was made by her companions to save her ; no sally to retake the prisoner, attempted by the inhabitants of the town she had so generously befriended ; nay, the governor himself was even suspected, with some reason, of having ordered the gates



to be shut upon her, with the express intention of delivering her, into the hands of her enemies !

The imprisonment of the Maid of Orleans produced a complete revival of hope in the English camp. Originally confined in the Château of Beaulieu, she was transferred successively to those of Beaufort, Arras, and Crotoy ; and the duke of Bedford, who, dissatisfied until he got her into his own hands, was even at that period planning the subsequent dreadful termination to all her successes, commenced a prosecution against her, on the score of sorcery ; and, strengthened by the aid of the bishop of Beauvais, under pretence that she was taken within the limits of his diocese, never rested until the price of blood was paid and received, and Joan a fast prisoner within the walls of Rouen.

The slender limbs of the poor heroine were now loaded with chains, and she was thrown into a dungeon, where no possibility existed of a recurrence of two former attempts she had made to escape, by leaping from a window, and which had nearly cost her life. An accusation of attempting suicide, was added to the already frightfully voluminous list of charges against her ; and to render the trial effectively imposing, priests, lawyers, and scholars, were summoned to take the depositions, and combat the arguments of a poor unlettered peasant girl ! Every description of imposition, every strained rule of law,



ecclesiastical and civil — all mean advantages — and deep-laid schemes to entrap—were exhausted upon this one unsupported and desolate creature : who for a considerable time stood, unmoved by their wiles, pleading her own cause, alone, and evidencing, by the simple and clear replies their questions elicited from her, that single innocence unaided is stronger than hydra-headed wrong.

In this enlightened age, the accusations which were advanced against Joan, would raise a smile by their absurdity, and a sneer by their boasted abstruseness ; but during six weary months, they sufficed to engage the entire powers of her enemies, until it was at length plain, despite all artifices—even to the inquisitorial resource of disguising a person as a fellow prisoner, for the purpose of eliciting fresh revelations to compromise her—that unless Joan were to have the credit of a martyr's death, there was no possibility of compassing her condemnation. Her king was held up to her derision ; the generous impulse rushed to her lip, and taught her to defend his name,—too justly assailed by others, to her confiding heart he was worth the sacrifice of the last drop of her blood,—the voices which had so often, to her distempered imagination, alternately breathed lofty command or gracious comfort, were scoffed at, or attributed to the agency of the enemy of mankind,—she bore her own wrongs with patient gentleness,



but not even the ministers of the Church could obtain her obedience, when these supposed essences dictated other courses of action ! At length, a paper containing a pledge upon her part, never again to assume male clothing, and never to bear arms in future, was given her to sign ; after doing so, the horrible persecution against her, dictated the substitution of a wholly different document, containing in addition a supposed confession of a variety of different offences ! Upon affixing a copy of the cross—by which, unable to read, she had subscribed the other—to this imposture, her sentence was declared to be commuted to perpetual imprisonment—diet “ on the bread of sorrow, and the water of affliction.”

But ignorance and revenge were not yet satiated. The bishop of Beauvais has received the imputation of having attempted to poison her, thus to get rid by murder, of one, whom he could not convict by argument. But it suited not the intention of her enemies, that she should die otherwise than by the hands of the public executioner. No steps were taken by Charles to exchange his faithful adherent for any of the many English prisoners of rank he detained—she was apparently forgotten, and shared the fate of those who “ put any confidence in princes,” no single voice was raised in her defence ; she was abandoned to her foes ! The rigours of her imprisonment were now increased



tenfold, guarded by five soldiers, three of whom scarcely ever left her cell, during the night, she was fixed to her bed by iron chains, and in the day, by one passing round her waist. For the honour of our country, let us believe, that though generally accused of pressing her execution, the English would have been better satisfied with a public exposure and imprisonment for life. Nor is it supposed that they endeavoured by any means to increase the horrors of her imprisonment. Joan still languished on, exhausted by want and watching, bitterly sensible of the ingratitude of the king, and the forgetfulness of her former friends, yet supported by the internal conviction of rectitude, and aided in her moments of enthusiasm by the dreams of angelic converse and approval. One morning, she discovered upon awakening that her clothes were removed, and only the dress of a man-at-arms, lying beside her bed. After awaiting in vain the reappearance of her own attire, she put on the dress, which revived vividly the stirring scenes of her former success. Infatuated girl! while she stood musing upon the past, spies had watched her movements; she was disturbed from her reverie—a last consolation, and one which she fondly deemed could not be taken from her—by the rude approach of her gaolers, who declared to her that she had violated the conditions of her compact, was guilty of a relapse into heresy, and



would now be excommunicated, and debarred from farther pardon or mercy!

At first, it was impossible to make the unfortunate Maid of Orleans understand the offence of which she had been guilty; but at length she realized her situation, and grew fully aware of the duplicity of those in whose hands she was left, while she resigned herself to a fate which she now plainly saw, malice had predetermined. Summoning her utmost stoicism, she succeeded, after the first burst of horror and despair at the information she was to be burned alive, in assuming a calm resignation, which rendered almost powerless the assaults of further grief or pain. "I hope," she said, raising her large dark eyes to heaven, "to be this night in paradise." Passively she submitted to be bound and placed in the open car, which was to convey her to the place of execution. Arriving there, the mockery of a religious controversy was enacted, then followed a discourse pronounced by Nicholas Midi; and finally the form of words used by the Inquisition:—"The Church can no longer defend you—it abandons your body into the hands of secular justice. Go in peace!"

The last scene of this fearful drama was played out in the Market-place at Rouen. Immediately opposite the great gate of the church of St. Ouen, a stake, elevated enough to procure all present a full view of the victim,











was erected, piled around with wood and combustibles. They covered the head of Joan with the cap of the Inquisition, bearing her accusations,—“Relapsed Heretic, Apostate, and Idolater,”—then she was dragged forward, and placed upon the pile.

It was at this moment, that looking around her with an inspired countenance, Joan earnestly requested that a crucifix might be given to her. An Englishman hurried forward, and breaking a stick in two pieces, formed one roughly, which she received, and pressed fervently to her bosom. So touching was her demeanour, so complete her resignation, that many left the Market-place, incapable of watching her constancy to the close: the very officials were melted to tears, while the bailli of Rouen could scarcely falter out the requisite orders. “Dieu soit béni!” exclaimed she, as she placed herself on the pile. The name of the Saviour was the last to quit her lips, and as long as she retained a single breath of life, she appeared to be pouring out her soul in prayer. When the smoke cleared away, the calcined ashes alone remained to France, of the martyred heroine who had saved her in her peril; and, as usual, general lamentation was heard from those, who, though preserved by her fortitude and constancy, had never evinced practical gratitude to rescue one, whose devotion they could plausibly admire, yet were too pusillanimous to copy! Alas for



poor humanity! which can adulate the prosperous, yet see the vast forest of great virtues cut down—yea, even aid in its extirpation, without an effort to preserve it, though protecting all beneath its shadow! How often does the mistaken motive called policy, which prompts to such ingratitude, deceive itself; and baseness finds no reward, but unavailing remorse becomes the profitless return for treachery! So was it with Joan; France felt herself more disgraced by the abandonment of her heroine, than by a thousand defeats; the gleam of the Maid's consuming pyre, was reflected in the universal glow of national shame,—and—fitting instrument of such inhumanity—priestcraft put forth all its cunning in aid of cruelty, and professed to punish imposture, by the grossest perversion of truth! We drop a veil over this scene gladly, for the heart shrinks less at the sufferings of the innocent victim, than at the malignant deceit of her persecutors; sad indeed is the moral, of how ignorance sears the mind's best feelings; how superstitious fanaticism obscures the judgment, until unguided by the Word, even the ministers of a religion professing peace, outrage its dictates, while they presume to call themselves its ministers, and profane His likeness, whom they yet claim to be their God!



## Margaret of Anjou.

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Born 1429—Died 1480.

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AGE of Romance ! era of soul-stirring and ennobling Chivalry ! when infant Science disdained not companionship with Poetry, her fairer sister, and honour, not wealth, was the guerdon of ambition ; when the shout of armed lists, or the approving smile of Beauty, supplied the youthful warrior's loftiest triumph, and

“ Life had yet a leisure hour for love ! ”

Man dreams now no longer, ours is the iron epoch of utility : a self-complacent sneer relaxes the features of the disciple of modern progress, as he gazes upon the rusty mail and empty vizor, from beneath which have issued thoughts, of whose language in action centuries have caught the echo ; he forgets that pure and lofty principles may have been entombed with their knightly possessors, and that it were wiser, perchance, still willingly to be duped by the visionary



enchantment of history's kaleidoscope, than to dissolve the charm by scrutinizing too narrowly the transparent elements of the delusion !

The sun shone brightly upon the last days of autumn, 1444, and lighted up a pageant, to whose component parts artistic skill lent a scarcely less brilliant effect, than the picturesque and variegated landscape of central France, in which the scene was laid. Within the range of hills inclosing rich fields, and valleys deep shaded by trees, clothed in the warm tints of the declining year, the eye wandered over groups of mounted cavaliers, whose pavilions, each embellished by a blazoned pennon of device, reflected the morning ray ; or rested upon painted galleries filled with fair women, their glances now bent in sparkling pleasure on the crowd below, anon, raised in conscious power, and little needing the aid of waving banners, floating plumes, and martial music, to kindle an enthusiasm in the knightly objects of their interest, which,—it might be,—never slumbered more. It was a tournament in honour of a recent marriage, solemnized in the then prevalent fashion, by proxy ; and the assembled company, which included the entire royal family of one large realm, and many of the noblest in another, approached the close of festivities, somewhat more elaborate than on similar occasions, and which had been already protracted beyond a week's space. But



it was not the conclusion of the *jête* alone that elicited the regrets of the revellers: a parting was at hand, and although it was one which, to most of those present, heralded for its heroine nothing but inspiring auspices of a new and splendid destiny, yet some there were who sighed at its auguries, and more than one sad heart whose fondest hopes the recent ceremonial had erased—hopes never deemed impossible till now! To the spectator, however, nothing of this was visible, and a lovely and a gallant sight it was, when the throng of chivalry and beauty, defiling through the barriers into the open country, quitted those lists, the scene of the gorgeous tourney which had just closed, and prepared to accompany the slight and graceful girl, some leagues upon her journey, towards her new country, and its hitherto unseen lord.

In the flush of opening womanhood—a womanhood presaged by youthful charms, so long the theme of admiration at the court of her aunt, the queen of France—scarcely fifteen, but possessing the germ of a mental vigour far beyond her years, and awaiting only the breath of circumstance to manifest its ardent energy, Margaret of Anjou, a portionless bride, save in the fatal dower of beauty and talent, both carefully estimated by the ambassadors who had conducted their sovereign's espousals, was escorted by them to take



her place upon the throne of England ; with what proportionate views as to her happiness and their own aggrandizement, it may be well to spend a few moments in investigating.

Henry VI., surnamed of Windsor, the only son of the hero of Agincourt, and Catherine the Fair, of Valois, had been called to assume the crown of his gallant sire, when an infant not twelve months old. Arrived at his twenty-first year, he was still unmarried, and apparently heedless if he retained that state during his entire life. "Of the most harmless, inoffensive, simple manners, of the most slender capacity, he was fitted, both by the softness of his temper and the weakness of his understanding, to be perpetually governed by those who surrounded him, and it was easy to foresee his reign would prove a perpetual minority."

About this period, the quarrel between the king's uncle Humphrey, the "good duke of Gloucester," and his grand uncle, the cardinal of Winchester (more generally known as Cardinal Beaufort), had nearly reached its climax ; and the latter, "who had filled the council with ecclesiastics," sought by their means, and the influence he had derived from being intrusted with the king's guardianship and education, to thwart his nephew Gloucester's views, whose office of Lord Protector had given him an opportunity to



become deservedly popular with all classes. Both parties and their respective factions, were naturally anxious to select the future queen, less as instrumental to the benefit of either monarch or kingdom, than to their own personal ambition ; though the duke, “a generous prince, was worsted in all court intrigues, for which his temper was not suited.” There is, indeed, a painful degree of sympathy attached to his memory ; not only in connection with his own mysterious end, but as the victim of the diabolical plot formed against his duchess (the daughter of Reginald, Lord Cobham), who had been accused of the crime of witchcraft, and sentenced to perpetual imprisonment.

The count of Armagnac having proposed his daughter in marriage with Henry, Gloucester warmly seconded his views, and affairs were speedily brought to a conclusion, if not by the king’s betrothal to the lady in question, by something very nearly akin to it. France, the scene of such long and desolating contest, robbed by death or captivity of many of her bravest princes, worn out by repeated drains upon her resources, and distracted with internal feuds, desired to rest from war for a time, and to recruit her shattered energies by a truce with her stronger rival. This treaty afforded the pretext to Beaufort and his associates, who had long fixed their eyes on Margaret as



every way suited to their purpose, for cementing the peace about to ensue, by an alliance with so near a connection of the French throne. "While this treaty was going on," says Monstrelet, "several other matters were introduced, and a marriage proposed between King Henry of England and the daughter of René, king of Sicily, duke of Lorraine and Bar, which was afterwards concluded." On the first mention of this proposed alliance, Gloucester strenuously set forth his objections; but "the earl of Suffolk, being returned to England, figured forth the match as a means to end the wars, to promote peace, and to make the kingdom happy; whereby he blinded the council, and painted forth the lady in the most lovely colours that beauty could be set forth in, and in conditions the most sublime that might become a princess," so that he "allured Henry," and caused the duke of Gloucester to find that it was "he alone who to his cost opposed it."\*

The earl of Suffolk was therefore empowered to espouse Margaret in the king's name, and to convey her with her suite to England; but to effect his purpose a cession was made to the family of the bride, which, though carefully concealed at the time, from all but those immediately interested in the marriage, was soon to attract just reprobation at home: the province

\* Biondi.



of Maine, vitally important to the English power in France, was promised to the uncle of Margaret, Charles of Anjou, "brother-in-law, prime minister, and favourite," of the French king. The stipulation being agreed on, the earl of Suffolk, now created marquis, (a devoted adherent of the cardinal), who had conducted both the treaty and its pendant, concluded an alliance, which afterwards proved not only "the source of destruction to himself," but of "infinite calamities to his country."

Margaret, daughter of René of Anjou, and Isabella of Lorraine, was the youngest of her parents' five children, and, according to history, the most favoured by nature of them all : her grandmother was Yoland, or Violante, of Arragon (at this time a constant visitant at the French court), and the Spanish blood thus intermingled, did not slumber in this one, at least, of her descendants. Margaret's own mother, a scion of the line of Charlemagne, was also as spirited as she was beautiful ; but René himself, so unfortunate in his career, appears to have naturally approximated more closely to the future consort of his daughter, being devoted to the refinements of art, and attached to the peaceful enjoyments of domestic life. The members of this family were united to each other by bonds of the strongest affection, and Margaret, we are told, was alike the favourite and admiration of



France and themselves. Possessed of "a masculine, courageous spirit, of an enterprising temper, endowed with solidity as well as vivacity of understanding, she had not been able to conceal those great talents, even in the privacy" of her father's narrowed court, "and it was reasonable to expect that when she should mount the throne, they would break out with still superior lustre." She was "the most accomplished of her age, both in body and mind, and seemed to possess those qualities which would equally qualify her to acquire the ascendant over Henry, and to supply all his defects and weaknesses." With these attractions it is not extraordinary that other proposals, anterior to those of the king of England, had been made for the hand of the Infanta (as she was called among the Provençals), and, indeed, the gallant Count de St. Pol, and the duke of Burgundy's handsome nephew, Count de Nevers, are both mentioned as favoured lovers of Margaret. In fact, to the first she is reported to have been engaged, but both these alliances were finally abandoned for the more splendid prospects opened by Suffolk's embassy, nor do we find any record of reluctance upon her part, to acquiesce in her father's acceptance. The silence of history upon those events which make up the individual's secret life of feeling, from which, nevertheless, external striking changes in the world's narrative emanate,



leaves us not only in many cases dubious, in what aspect to regard objects of public observation, but also exposed to the danger of forming erroneous conclusions, by restricting our judgment to consequences.

The treaty had been signed at Tours, the present residence of the court, where Rapin, quoting Hall, Biondi, and others, states the marriage to have been celebrated, although the father and mother of Margaret, having been united at Nanci, it is on this, as well as upon other accounts, most probable, that those authorities which fix the last-mentioned city as the scene of the nuptials, are correct. A notice of the event, comprised in a dozen lines of Monstrelet's chronicle, states that here, "with the king, were René, king of Sicily, and numbers of great lords and knights, the queens of France and Sicily, the dauphiness, and the daughter of René, whom the earl of Suffolk had come with a splendid embassy to demand in marriage, for the king of England. After a few discussions, everything was agreed upon; but before their departure with the new queen, a magnificent tournament was held, in which the kings of France and Sicily, the Lord Charles d'Anjou, the Counts de Foix and de St. Pol, the Lord Ferry de Lorraine, and several lords, tilted; these feasts lasted eight days, and the ladies were most splendidly dressed." The Lord



Ferry of Lorraine, as he is here called, had recently married Margaret's only sister, having eloped with her upon the occasion of this very tournament, since a steady disinclination was manifested by the family to his long-projected suit; and the rebellious, though forgiven pair, accompanied the queen of England as far as Bar le Duc, where, we are told, "René and her mother took leave of her with floods of tears, and prayers for her welfare." Two leagues from Nanci, the king and queen of France, had previously parted with their niece, "with many tears, and recommended her to the protection of God; their grief was so great that they could not speak."

And now she began to realize her new position in all its clear detail of light and shadow (for in the far-off horizon was even this last perceptible), as she embarked upon those surges—meet emblem of her subsequently stormy fate—so soon to separate her destiny from the land of her birth, and approached the English shore, where awaited her the same portentous fury of the elements, which was ever the companion of her successive arrivals. There are moments when the soundest judgment is not impassible to such natural influences, and who shall say that the emotions of the queen, might not have augmented the agony of the woman, at the severance of every tie of national and personal attachment, implicated in her brief but inauspicious



voyage? It is not difficult to believe, that when the last line of the coast she fondly gazed upon, faded from the eyes of Margaret, the crown so soon to grace that noble head, appeared about to encircle a brow aching with regrets, and, it might be, with some slight foretaste of grief, consequent upon the entwining of her own hitherto sequestered daisy, with the thorny glories of the crimson rose of England! Aware, as she must have been, of the deficiencies of Henry's character, and of his total dissimilarity to the husband she herself would have selected, she *might* have considered herself in the light of a victim to her country's welfare, more 'especially if attached to either of her former lovers—no improbable surmise. Nevertheless, whether we are to reckon amongst her trials at this early period, the unsuccessful struggle of love, with policy and ambition, we find no mention of that endearing and plastic nature, which her previous character predicted; on the contrary, there appeared a decision and energy probably attributable to her thorough acquaintance with the imbecility of her future spouse, both also from the first, perhaps, more excessive than her advocates in England either expected or desired. All circumstances, therefore, combined, must have induced feelings totally dissonant to the best development of her character, by bringing into exercise elements of sternness, which, in common



with the grander quality of heroism, might, but for these, have lain dormant for ever, and which account for much that is repugnant to our prejudices in her after-history.

Although the marriage had taken place in the month of November, delays upon her transit from Nanci rendered it the end of March, or the beginning of the following April, before Margaret landed at Porchester, whence, proceeding to Southampton, she was seized with a sudden and serious indisposition, which again protracted her meeting with her royal consort. According to Stow, and others, Henry had been awaiting her at Southwick, where, on the 22nd of April, 1445, the marriage was personally solemnized; the ring used on this occasion being made from one "of gold, garnyshed with a fayr rubie, sometime yeven unto us by our bel oncle the Cardinal of Englande, with the which we were sacred on the day of our coronation at Parys, delivered unto Mathew Phelip to breke, and thereof to make an other ryng for the quene's wedding-ring." The duke of Gloucester met her at Blackheath, and on the following Friday, May 28th, conducted her in triumph to London, "attended [Stow says] by the mayor, aldermen, and sheriffs of the city, and the crafts of the same, on horseback." Another tournament completed the celebration of the event, which was distinguished by



a costly magnificence and display, hardly justified by the empty state of the exchequer on both sides, and somewhat in contrast with the scantiness of the young queen's personal wardrobe.

"The natures of the late married couple were, not opposite, sufficiently differing : the husband was of a womanish inclination, the wife a manlike spirit ; the king was humble, devout, spiritually given, caring only for his soul's health ; the queen was proud, ambitious, worldly given, and not to be quieted till, having brought the kingdom to be governed as she pleased, she might see herself free from rivals in the government. The duke of Gloucester was no ways pleasing to her, as well for that he had opposed her marriage, an injury not to be forgotten, as likewise that her husband, being long since out of his minority, was still governed by him as formerly when he was under age."\* This dissonance of taste and feeling, corroborated by every contemporary and subsequent writer, affords sufficient ground, even perhaps upon the score of necessity, for the independence assumed by Margaret in public affairs, from the outset of her career, without reference to the instigations of Beaufort, Suffolk, Buckingham, Somerset, and others, who, through her instrumentality, attempted to promote their own political and private schemes.

\* Biondi.



It was evident to Beaufort and his party that, so long as Gloucester opposed the relinquishment of Maine, as a measure most impolitic, and fraught with fatal issue to the best interests of the crown, there could be no prospect of success, and therefore the removal of this powerful opponent to his public plans, and the object alike of his undying hatred, even by the foul means of treachery and murder, did not appal the unrelenting cardinal. We readily avail ourselves of the discrepancies of historians upon this point, to exonerate the queen from participation in so horrible a tragedy. The mind is indeed too fully awakened to a sense of the fell cruelty of some, "who even on their death-beds play the ruffian," not gladly to take refuge in every rational pretext from the supposition that revenge should ever so unsex the feminine character: in the case of Margaret, indeed, we have every presumption for her innocence, not only from the readiness of popular fury to involve the highest personages in the crimes of their subordinates, but also because it is admitted that her "usual activity and spirit made the public conclude that the duke's enemies durst not have ventured upon such a deed without her privity." In fact, by no means a favourable writer is compelled to acknowledge, that if Margaret connived at the murder, she must have evinced an "ignorance in things to come," strangely



at variance with her characteristic foresight, for this act "threw her headlong upon those evils which, with the price of her own blood she would willingly have redeemed ;" and by it she "lost all that she could lose, her life excepted—her husband, son, and kingdom." The prejudice, however, of political partisanship caused the sentiments of the public to run strongly against the queen, and the stigma affixed to the plotters of the duke's death became indelible, no less from the excellence of the victim, than from the treachery of the crime. It was at first deemed advisable to lure the duke to his destruction, by specious overtures of friendship, which, inducing his distrust, might urge him to compromise himself by some undisguised act of retaliation. But this plan failing through the probity of his own conduct and intentions, a parliament was called first at Cambridge, and afterwards at St. Edmundsbury (in preference to London, where Gloucester's popularity would have protected him), and shortly after his appearance there, he not only found himself accused of high treason, but discovered that the king's mind had been so abused to his prejudice, that, without being permitted an opportunity of exculpation, he was committed to close confinement, nor even suffered to retain his usual attendants. Seventeen days afterwards he was found dead in his bed ; and though the public exposure of his



body—the plausible evidence of his having sustained no violent end—was resorted to (an act successfully tried in former cases, but of itself sufficient to excite suspicion), the universal belief that he had been murdered, remained unshaken ; and this conviction acquired strength from the circumstance of the sudden decease of his arch enemy Beaufort (“a prelate much more proper for the world than the Church”), a few weeks subsequently.

Crime is from its very nature short-sighted, and the enemies of the duke of Gloucester soon experienced this truth, by the influx of results inimical to their wishes and anticipations. So long as the duke (the heir presumptive to the crown) continued alive, the popular voice would have been too strongly in his favour to admit of the pretensions, however well founded, of another ; but as his death removed an important safeguard from the reigning monarch, so it encouraged the duke of York, descended from a branch senior to the house of Lancaster, to an indirect attempt upon the succession, by securing an extensive interest in his claims, although not appearing personally on the scene. To increase also the national discontent, Edmund, duke of Somerset, who had been some time since appointed governor of Normandy, was obliged to dismiss the greater portion of his troops from want of pecuniary supplies ; and Charles of France, by a



diligent employment of the period of the truce, having collected and disciplined fresh forces, renewed the war with England, with the success which might have been anticipated. This, and a complication of other circumstances, conspired to render the childless queen of England apparently devoted to the interests of her own relatives in France, and at the same time careless of those at home ; and the unfavourable impression, studiously fomented by the duke's party, drew upon Margaret daily increasing odium and mistrust. Suffolk, advanced by the queen to the rank of duke, was branded with the appellation of "the favourite ;" and it was complained that the council had been filled, at his suggestion, by her partisans, under the king's authority, without the smallest consideration of their fitness for the posts to which they were promoted, until the general tumult reached its acme, upon the expulsion of the English from France, and the entire loss of possessions, some of which had been united to the crown of England for a period of three centuries.

The commencement of the year 1450 saw the popular commotion at its height, and Suffolk, who could expect but little sympathy from the aristocracy, ill brooking, in their sensitiveness of hereditary pride, the exaltation of a merchant's grandson to the highest honours in the realm, seemed blindly resolved to brave the universal hostility, so speedily to issue in his fall.



This once determined upon, as common in such cases, no pause was allowed for reflection upon the honour or humanity of the means. Nevertheless, the queen's power, so decisively used in his behalf, rendered the accomplishment of Suffolk's ruin no easy task ; for Margaret spared no endeavours to secure his safety, but herself suggested his temporary banishment, and furthered his escape to France. How terribly her efforts were frustrated appears in the end of the unfortunate duke. At the moment when he imagined himself safe (perhaps from superstitious reliance upon the verity of a prediction which had declared that he should die in the Tower), he was intercepted near Dover, by emissaries sent to destroy him, in a vessel called "St. Nicholas of the Tower." His head was struck off, and his body thrown into the sea, neither do we find that "any inquiry was made after the accomplices in this atrocious deed," though we may well conceive that Margaret deeply deplored the loss of this her first English friend, devoted to her, as was also his duchess, and that she was unrelaxingly, though silently, meditating schemes of vengeance towards the perpetrators, well known, though at present beyond her reach.

The duke of Somerset succeeded the unfortunate Suffolk in power with the council and credit with the queen, who, lately thrown upon her own guidance and



responsibility, could scarcely have made a more unfortunate selection of her future adviser. His losses in France, added to his quarrel with the earl of Warwick, rendered her favour, which she avowed so recklessly as to incur much bitter comment and censure, a sure means of attracting powerful opposition to their joint schemes; in fact, the position of affairs at this juncture was so critical as to induce an open and speedy rupture, when, upon York's return from Ireland, the king, by advice of his wife, opposed his landing, and absolutely compelled him to effect his purpose at another port, whence, hastening to London, he shortly after appeared in arms, at the head of 10,000 men. The impending storm was averted by Henry's concession of York's principal requisition, namely, the committal of Somerset to the Tower, who, instead of being at once arrested, was, by the queen's contrivance, secreted behind the arras in the king's pavilion, during the latter's interview with his rebellious subject. Thence, unable to bear tamely the contumelious terms in which his rival upbraided him to the sovereign, he rushed forth and confronted his accuser, to the latter's great amazement, and the sad discredit both of Margaret and the king. The scene terminated in the duke of York's arrest, but Henry, feeling himself still sufficiently powerful in the realm, to prevent further mischief, permitted him to retire to his



castle of Wigmore, on the borders of Wales, leaving Somerset to enjoy unopposed, the queen's blind partiality.

At this time was it, when threatened by all the sad disasters of civil war, and smarting under the loss of Guienne, and its attendant bloodshed in France, that Margaret became a mother; but the birth of this first, and, as it proved, only child, was regarded with no pleasure by the nation, and seemed to augur fresh misfortunes to its parents; occurring simultaneously with the illness of the king, who fell sick at Clarendon, in Wiltshire, and shortly after confirmed the fears of his friends, by evincing decided mental aberration. These circumstances probably induced the duke of York to relinquish at once all disguise, and to assume a more determined position: he is said to have cast doubts upon the legitimacy of the infant prince, which probably he himself in sincerity did not entertain. At all events, the appearance of young Edward removed the last scruple to asserting his claim to a crown, which he might have patiently awaited until the death of the sickly monarch, but would not calmly surrender to the present unexpected succession. The hapless prince was born on the 13th of October, 1453, at Westminster, to which palace his royal sire had been removed, and was lying utterly incapable of recog-



nising the intelligence of an event, which he otherwise might have regarded as

“ — the rainbow of his future years,”

in the midst of darkness and sorrow.

But the king's malady was productive of serious political embarrassment to the queen and her party, besides the infliction of domestic distress ; for, unsupported by the shadow of Henry's authority, which hitherto had sanctioned all her measures, Margaret was compelled to yield a tacit consent to those laid down for her, in the imprisonment of the duke of Somerset, and the appointment of York as protector. The former was “ arrested in the queen's greate chamber,” and sent to the Tower, where, as Stow quaintly observes, “ he kept his Christmas without great solemnity.” York, meanwhile, “ bearing all the rule, governed as regent ;” but when all for a period appeared lost, the king unexpectedly “ recovered, caused the duke of Somerset to be set at libertye, and preferred him to be captain of Calais, wherewith not only the Commons, but many of the nobility, favourers of Richard, duke of Yorke, were greatly grieved and offended, saying that he had lost Normandy, and would lose also Calais.”

The limits of a brief sketch, restricted to individual rather than to national history, do not admit of more



than passing allusion to those stirring events which reflected honour and happiness, or disgrace and affliction, upon their agents. Indeed, it is sufficiently remarkable, that, though living at, and involved in, the most momentous period of early English age, fewer records (and no personal correspondence), of this queen are preserved, than of any other so eminent character similarly circumstanced. We may, therefore, generally observe that York, from the contrariety of occurrences to his wishes, foiled in his last expedient for preserving peace, and hurried by his party into measures which his own moderation reprehended, after an unsuccessful attempt at the arbitration of his quarrel with Somerset, retired into Wales, and employed himself in raising an army, soon to strike the first blow in the memorable contest between the rival Red and White Roses, which plucked from the bosom of the isle "the pale and maiden blossom"—peace, and "incarnadined" the green fields of England with the blood of her noblest children.

After the battle of St. Albans, fought on the 23rd of May, 1455, the king was taken prisoner by the duke of York, and having sustained a slight wound, was conducted with much care to London; while the death of Somerset, who, with Lords Clifford, Strafford, and Northumberland, fell in this action, would have apparently dissipated the expectation of a



successful endeavour to regain power, to one less energetic than the queen. The engagement itself was a signal warning of the disasters of future conflicts. It was the "first blood spilt in that fatal quarrel, which was not finished in less than a course of thirty years, which was signalized by twelve pitched battles, which opened a scene of extraordinary fierceness and cruelty, is computed to have cost the lives of eighty princes of the blood, and almost entirely annihilated the ancient nobility of England."

Thwarted in her military manœuvres, and for a time subjected again to the restriction of the duke of York's authority, who resumed the protectorship on the king's relapse, Margaret, to all appearance absorbed in her devotion to her husband and son at Greenwich, nevertheless employed her energies secretly, and, as it appears, with success, to promote division in the council, and neutralize by every obstacle in her power, the efficiency and fulfilment of her opponents' plans. With Henry, son of the late duke of Somerset, as the queen's newly-established counsellor, whose ardent desire to revenge his father's death, rendered him a ready coadjutor in her resolute policy, it is not astonishing that, in the beginning of the year 1456 we find York again removed from office, and Margaret availing herself of Henry's partial recovery, to address letters "under the privy seal," to York,



Salisbury, and Warwick, requesting their immediate presence, as if on affairs of state, but in reality to get them into her power. The court was at this time at Coventry, whither Margaret had removed with the king, not thinking the latter safe in the capital ; but by good fortune the three peers, who had already so far obeyed the writ of summons as to have commenced their journey, were warned by private emissaries of their danger, and withdrew with the greatest despatch, each to his safest place of retreat. " The queen was extremely vexed at this disappointment, but her comfort was that she had separated the three lords, and so rendered them less formidable to her." Meanwhile, the French and Scots taking advantage of the quarrel to invade the kingdom, she, in alarm, was this time sincere in her desire for domestic amity, to secure the king's and her own safety, and to present unanimity of counsel in resistance to the common foe.

For this purpose, and by means of ecclesiastical influence, a public reconciliation took place, the speciousness of which was betrayed, by the pomp employed in its demonstration. There is something almost farcical in the parade with which the belligerents made their triumphal entry into London ; the queen for once so far forced to " digest the venom of her spleen " as to walk hand in hand with the duke of York, though the amount of real cordiality between



them was speedily evinced by a trivial quarrel amongst the subordinates, sufficing to induce a renewal of hostilities, and to urge the procuring by Margaret of an order to arrest Warwick, the special object of her unconquerable hate. Of this, however, the earl again received timely warning, and escaped to his government of Calais, but the queen did not relax her efforts in raising troops; on the contrary, at the battle of Bloreheath, Henry being too ill to assume the command, she, if not actually on the field, was sufficiently near to act as the presiding spirit of the fray. In fact, disaster seemed only to elicit fresh resources of energy and resolution, and upon the flight of the royalists we find her, after her return to Coventry, rallying her adherents with such success as to be able, in seven months, again to take the field against the rebels, to whom she offered terms. Fortune here appears to have favoured the queen's assumption of the entire management of the war, and with the troops she had by her own perseverance collected, she pressed the insurgents so vigorously, as to force the duke of York, with his second son, Edmund, earl of Rutland, to fly to Ireland, whilst the eldest, the earl of March, followed Warwick to Calais, there to remain until the ensuing year, when they both returned to London, reanimated by some recent naval successes, and found themselves possessed of sufficient strength to hazard



the battle of Northampton. Neither was Margaret less desirous for this engagement, which occurred July 10th, 1460, but, notwithstanding her personal presence and direction, treachery assisted the banner of the White Rose, several of her most gallant adherents were slain, and her royal husband taken prisoner, having remained with characteristic placidity in his tent.

Immediately upon his return to London, the duke of York, employing the king's name, convened a parliament, at the opening of which he "sate himself down in the king's chair, under the cloth of state, where, after having sate awhile, he told them a long rabble of reasons why he had sate down in that place, that by the law it was due unto him; and being desired to go visit the king, he said, God excepted, he knew no superior." This account seems to imply that the duke's deference to his sovereign, hitherto so uniformly demonstrated, was somewhat lessened by exasperation, but at all events, Margaret, aware that she could expect but little forbearance, rather than confide in the magnanimity of her enemy, fled to Durham, whence, with only eight persons, she passed into Wales, and subsequently into Scotland. Here tidings shortly after reached her, that Henry had formally conceded his own son's right to the succession of the throne, in favour of the duke of York and



his descendants ; yet even this, the bitterest intelligence to

“ — A princess, whose declining head,  
Like to a drooping lily after storms,  
Had bowed to her foes' feet, and played the slave  
To keep her husband's greatness unabated,”—

sent by him who might at least have learned from her heroism, to defend the claim of the hapless scion of royalty, now an exiled wanderer from his sire and heritage, in the helplessness of childhood, — failed to quench the fire of Margaret's indomitable spirit, and supplying, by the zeal of a mother's fondness, her husband's infirmity of purpose, she set about the levy of new subsidies in Scotland, where she experienced less difficulty than might have been anticipated. An obstacle was attempted to her designs in the shape of an order from the king to join him without delay, but recognising York as the originator of this manœuvre, she obeyed the mandate by marching into England at the head of between eighteen and twenty thousand men.

A surprisal so sudden took the duke utterly at a disadvantage, yet under the impulse of an obvious necessity, he hastened to check her warlike majesty's advance, with about five thousand men, the only force available at this critical emergency. Upon the discovery of his inability to cope with his threatening



foe, he retired to Sandal Castle, a fortress strong enough to defy siege, wherein he determined to await fresh succours ; but alas ! he was doomed to experience the truth that the tongue is sometimes a sharper weapon than the sword, and that a woman's taunts pierce through armour, which might defy the thrusts of the steel. Secure in her superior numbers, Margaret resolved to force her adversary from his intrenchments, and marching her troops under the castle walls, assailed the duke in terms of such bitter contumely, and with such sarcastic reflection upon his cowardice in fearing to face a woman, that, exasperated beyond all prudence, he sallied from the gates, and soon found himself overwhelmed by the vast disproportion of an enemy, whose advantage was augmented by an ambush previously prepared by the queen. The struggle was neither dubious nor protracted ; "in less than half an hour," two thousand Yorkists, with their leader, lay dead on Wakefield Green ; and so fiercely were the passions of the combatants inflamed, that even after the engagement, when Aspill, the late duke's chaplain, endeavoured to save the life of the young earl of Rutland, his pupil, by declaring his parentage to Lord Clifford, the latter "struck his dagger into the boy's heart, and went on his way rejoicing at the most barbarous and inhuman revenge that ever cruel man took." It was this



relentless soldier (whose strong political hatred was aggravated by the recollection of his father's death at St. Albans), who brought the head of York to the queen placed on the point of a spear, and it is hardly credible that her soft and feminine features could be so belied by the ferocious spirit of satisfaction she evinced, —true echo in her heart of the barbarity of the age in which she lived ! Those long, languid eyes, whose reigning expression was a chastened and tender melancholy—that lofty brow, shaded by its sunny threads of silk, the throne of thought in its serenity—the clear outline of the Grecian profile—the lips gentle and loving, breathing refinement, and formed to part into graceful and artless smiles—who could have thought that these bright pencillings of Nature's lavish hand, should be desolated by dread passions of the soul, inciting her to gaze with triumphant pleasure upon the spectacle of fallen greatness, and to follow up hateful carnage by the insatiate impulse of revenge ? Salisbury was executed by the queen's command on the following day, and his head placed beside that of the duke of York, which had been surmounted by a paper crown, "in derision of his pretended title." This further cruelty was equally needless as excessive, since the unhappy earl, already languishing from the effects of a wound, would scarcely have survived to endure the threatened horrors of captivity ; but with



blind fury, Margaret "disgraced her triumph, and that of the house of Lancaster," by such acts as these ; and "spent her time in the execution of her prisoners, instead of improving the victory, by rapid advances towards the capital." But the season of retaliation was not long delayed, for upon her army's march from the north, the queen herself, commanding one division, and the earl of Pembroke (the king's half-brother), the other, the latter was met at Mortimer's Cross by the earl of March, now become duke of York, and the defeat of the royalists presented an opportunity, too readily embraced, for the exercise of sanguinary reprisals. Margaret appears to have been more successful, and St. Albans was a second time the scene of a fierce engagement, which terminated in her favour, notwithstanding that Warwick, the leader of the rebels, had been reinforced by his friends the Londoners.

It may be supposed that the separation of the royal pair since the king's capture at Northampton rendered this victory doubly acceptable, in that its result was to procure their reunion, and to allow some respite from civil strife, in the hot and fiery atmosphere of which, the affections so speedily decay. They met in the tent of Clifford, and the king, at his consort's desire, conferred the dignity of knighthood upon "their sonne, Prince Edward, and thirty more of



them who had valiantly behaved themselves in the battell ;” yet could neither the dictates of her gentler nature, nor the promises of her lord, avail to induce relinquishment of her unfeminine resolves, and on Ash-Wednesday, in defiance of Henry’s personal protection, the execution of Lord Bouville and Sir Thomas Kyriel was perpetrated (as we read), even before her eyes, and in presence of the youthful prince !

Events had by this time assumed such an aspect, that it was clearly impossible to insure peace by the temporary success of either side, and hence, in the very moment of its triumph, Edward of York was rapidly advancing towards the royal army, which, to the last degree undisciplined, was in no condition to oppose him. Urged by these circumstances, and hopeless of enlisting the Londoners in her service, already so offended at the insulting tone with which she had demanded provisions for her soldiery, and at the depredations of her northern cavalry, as to close their gates against her, the queen was once more compelled reluctantly to retreat, leaving the field open to the victorious Edward. This trial of “hope deferred” was shortly afterwards bitterly augmented, by intelligence that the latter, on entering the metropolis, had been received with acclamation by the people, who, upon Warwick’s public demand, “which



they would acknowledge as their king, Henry or young Edward?" with every demonstration of universal consent, proclaimed the representative of the house of York by the title of Edward IV.

The newly-made sovereign was soon called upon to maintain his assumed prerogative against a foe, whom experience had already proved unlikely to relinquish her rights without a struggle, but who, like Antæus, seemed to gather fresh vigour, from each successive prostration. Scarcely had a week elapsed, before he heard that the indefatigable queen, at the head of sixty thousand men, was anxiously awaiting him near the scene of her former success in Yorkshire ; but the White Rose was now the object of Fortune's fickle favours, and Nature herself seemed to conspire to complete the ruin of the unhappy Henry, by annihilating the last hope of his energetic consort. A storm of sleet, driving full in the faces of the Lancastrians, decided the contest of Towton ; in vain were their arrows spent upon the ground lately occupied by their opponents, who, under cover of the snow, had retreated from beyond their range ; incapable of further attack, by the exhaustion of their weapons, these last were returned upon them, and they were utterly routed, " many being slain with their own shafts picked from the field." Upon receiving the account of this signal defeat, Henry and Margaret,



possessed now of no refuge in the country, of which they were become but nominally the sovereigns, hurried, with the duke of Exeter, to Scotland, where they were permitted for a short time to repose, the reigning monarch contenting himself with passing a bill of attainder upon each several member of the exiled royal family. This was also extended to many of the noblest of their adherents, and the dethroned princes had soon to expend bitter and unavailing regrets upon the fate of those tried friends in their adversity, whose devotion to the interests of their fallen house, was terribly to be expiated on the scaffold.

If forbearance towards her captive adversaries be a quality of heroism which Margaret needed, her pre-eminent magnanimity in misfortune, justly entitles her to the appellation of a great queen ; and it is difficult to express adequately our admiration of the fortitude and perseverance, with which, at this dark period of her history, she endeavoured to obtain aid from Scotland, with every counter-influence employed against her. Not only had she to buy the assistance she required, by the cession of the town of Berwick, and the betrothal of her son to the sister of James, but to proceed alone to France, there to solicit further supplies of men and money, from her first cousin Louis, who had succeeded his father, Charles VII. It was no



new trial to our forlorn heroine to venture upon this difficult mission, unsupported but by its great purport, the restoration of her husband's rights ; she had ever been the one to decide, and to a mind now cognisant of its own intrinsic power, action, ever preferable to apathy, assumed its fullest scope, when unfettered by the opinions of others. But for her son, she might have resigned the stake for which she so ardently played, and retired with contentment to the privacy more congenial to her mild spouse ; but with the powerful incentive, not of Henry's right alone, but that of the anticipated line of his successors, indifference on her part would have been reprehensible, even if such a nature as hers, could have affected it. Accompanied, therefore, by her son, the precious object of her fondest interest, she departed at once for the Continent, being compelled to accept a passage thither, at the hands of a merchant, who gratefully thus acknowledged a service, she had rendered him in her youth.

Still in the prime of that extraordinary beauty, which had ever rendered her remarkable, and appealing in the eloquence of forsaken sorrow, to the sympathy and gallantry of her countrymen, Margaret, if she obtained not all she desired, yet received ample proof that the fascinations of her youth, remained unimpaired by misfortune. The duke of Bretagne first guaranteed



his aid, while a former friend, the gallant and romantic Pierre de Brezé, Count de Varennes, grand sénéchal of Normandy, offered her his fortune and sword, and raised a body of men-at-arms in her service. Margaret, somewhat imprudently, by her too evident gratitude to this heroic supporter, offended other allies, and though she succeeded with Louis so far as to procure a loan in money, with two thousand troops, yet it is quaintly observed that, the monarch, in giving the command of them to De Brezé, wished to insure the count's destruction, who, though preserved, certainly proved a most unfortunate partisan. The queen's fleet sailed, and, appearing off Tinmouth, many of the ships were driven on shore near Bamborough by a storm; the French took shelter in Holy Island, where they were attacked and beaten by a superior force, De Brezé himself narrowly escaping in a fishing-boat to Berwick.

Another, but too common evil, incident to the unfortunate, occurred in the desertion of many from her standard, who did not resume their allegiance until some trifling successes had reassured them. Amongst these were Ralph Percy (brother to the duke of Northumberland), Somerset, and Exeter, who had been recently pardoned by Edward; but the faint hopes engendered by their return were but expiring throbs in the existence of a royalty, from which vitality



had already flown. The defeat of the Lancastrians by Lord Montague on Hedgley Moor, was rapidly succeeded by the battle of Hexham, and extinguished for the present all prospects of retrieval. Sir Humphrey Neville, with the Lords Hungerford, De Roos, and the perjured Somerset, were immediately beheaded; Percy fell in the battle, with his last breath rejoicing at his return to loyalty in the remarkable exclamation, "I have saved the bird in my bosom." After a perilous escape, Margaret concealed herself and her son in the forest of Hexham, where the scene of her meeting with the robber occurred, familiar to our earliest associations, the gallant bandit, according to the historical narrative, attending the illustrious fugitives "willingly, and conducting them in safety towards the seashore, whence they arrived at Sluys, and afterwards went to Bruges, where they were received most honourably. At Bethune a body of the duke of Burgundy's archers met and escorted them to St. Pol; and, indeed, the treatment Margaret experienced from this prince was so opposed to the feelings she entertained for him, that it is said she repented much, and thought herself unfortunate that she had not sooner thrown herself on his protection, as her affairs would probably have prospered better." We may hope that similar examples of honourable commiseration alleviated in some degree the seven long years of subsequent separation











from her husband, which she passed in devoting herself to the education of her son, who, under the instruction of Sir John Fortescue, expanded into an interesting and attractive youth, and cheered the weary exile, by the promise of a perpetuity of his father's virtues, without the imbecility which obscured them.

The hopes, which still slumbered in her own breast, Margaret sedulously strengthened in her son, neither calculating the probability of a fatal issue to herself, nor to him whom they were to consign to an early grave, while they accelerated his father's death. The year 1469 saw these too precarious visions assume a tangible form. Constantly informed by her emissaries of the state of England, where many continued their correspondence with the banished consort of the house of Lancaster, despite King Edward's efforts to secure their attachment, it was reserved, in the strange fabric of her fate, for the queen's bitterest enemy hitherto, now to weave the most critical tissue of her destiny. The earl of Warwick, whose quarrel with the house of York has been variously accounted for, but whose anger was justified if only by the treatment he had sustained from the king, respecting Edward's marriage with Bona of Savoy, sister to the French queen, quitted the English court in disgust, and applying to Louis of France, so far gained his



co-operation, that Margaret was, the following year, sent for from Angers, where she had latterly resided, and after some difficulty persuaded to give him a meeting. It is fruitless to investigate the motives of either party for the reconciliation itself, or for the restoration of mutual confidence: that Warwick should marry one daughter to the duke of Clarence, the reigning king's brother, yet negotiate an union for the other with the heir of Lancaster, whose interests he was thus solemnly pledged to promote, appears to the last degree inexplicable. Doubtless, consistency was not the virtue of the age! Were any letters of Margaret extant, a clue might be afforded in this labyrinth of history; as it is, we have only to record the bare facts of the meeting and the reconciliation, followed by Margaret's consent to Warwick for the alliance between their children. The fair and unfortunate Anne Neville was married to the Prince of Wales in August, 1470, and Warwick, upon the completion of the ceremony, sailed for England, there to enkindle again the flame of war, which had so long devastated her green vales. Under the joyous excitement of the earl's commencing success, and the prestige of its continuance afforded by tidings of Henry's emancipation, the queen, with the young married pair, the bride's mother, the prior of St. John, and as large an armament as King Louis and her



father could afford, set forth from France in the following February. But again was the stormy passage she encountered, the sad presage of the fatal welcome awaiting her advent to the land of her adoption and misfortunes, for hardly had she touched the shore, when intelligence was brought of the disastrous action of Barnet, the deaths of Warwick and Montague, and the recapture of the wretched Henry. The sudden transition from joy to the abyss of hopelessness, was too much even for the iron spirit which had stood unshaken, nor shown a sign of weakness, under trials which might have made the sternest natures quail : her suffering was so intense and appalling, that "she fell down as if pierced with an arrow." For a space her energies seemed paralyzed—her courage vanished—her hopes, her fears, at an end ! There is a point at which anguish becomes temporarily its own remedy, and insensibility is the anodyne of speechless sorrow :—this solace was hers !

It had been well for the unhappy queen if she had never awakened from her swoon of despair, nor reopened those eyes, fated so soon to rest upon a scene of woe, unexampled even in her calamitous career ! After a short sanctuary at Beaulieu, in Hampshire, upon the receipt of the adherence of several lords, she once more set forth, with many misgivings for "the prince, her son's safety," whom



she vainly urged to retire to France, and, arriving at Bath, there assembled her friends with the wreck of the army of Warwick. On the 27th of April, "thirteen days after the battle of Barnet," Edward, who had again publicly proscribed herself and her partisans, set off in pursuit of the queen's army, with which he came up at Tewkesbury, Gloucester having refused to open its gates upon her approach. Occupying a position most advantageous to her enemy, inferior in strength, and subject to the treachery or cowardice of one of her generals, with an army commanded by the prince her son, whose courage was neutralized by inexperience, Margaret witnessed on this, her last battle-field, the total dispersion of her faithful but diminished adherents, and with her son was dragged to the tent of her ungenerous and exasperated foe.

Shakspeare has vividly portrayed the harrowing circumstances of this young prince's death, killed in cold blood before the eyes of his agonized mother, who survived to endure the miseries of imprisonment, after tasting, what to her spirit must have been worse than death, the disgrace of a public entry into London in the train of her conqueror, her wretchedness arriving at its climax, in the dark and mysterious tragedy of her husband's murder! It was scarcely astonishing, that, though no longer formidable to the reigning family, she should have been subjected to a rigorous



confinement, but by degrees, this was considerably relaxed, and at the conclusion of the year 1475, the first instalment of her ransom being paid, she departed from her prison in Wallingford Castle, and sailed for France. It is matter of question how much credit for her freedom, belongs to her father's affection, or to the liberality of her selfish cousin Louis, who has been generally supposed to have effected it. King Edward was negotiating a marriage between Elizabeth of York (formerly offered to Prince Edward of Lancaster), and the dauphin, when the ransom of Margaret was arranged. The king of Sicily entered into engagements with the king of France, that the county of Provence, after his decease, should revert to the latter, and be united for ever to the crown, in return for which she was released, and joined her father in the cession. Du Clos, however, affirms that "on the 7th of March, 1476, she renounced all her claims to the county in favour of the king; this was two months before the treaty with King René was concluded," and between four and five months after she had quitted England. The first instalment was paid in November, 1475, the last in March, 1480, the whole sum being 50,000 crowns.

Within a mile or two of Angers, in a castle belonging to King René, were spent the closing years of one who, in the solitude of her undisturbed retreat,



could indulge to the full, the melancholy reminiscences of her eventful life, absorbed apparently in the past, and with affections too exhausted to allow of any interest in the future. The death of her father in the year 1480, induced her removal to the vicinity of Saumur, where, two years after, Margaret breathed her last. The deaths of many noble persons of both sexes, rendered this same year (1482) memorable ; yet, though several amongst these exceeded the period of her own existence, fifty years, it is certain that no "storied urn or record" of her contemporaries, comprehends an equal amount of fame or vicissitude, to what attaches to her, whose resting-place is distinguished by no monument, save the venerable pile of Angers cathedral, where she was entombed.

Hume says of her, that she was "an admirable princess, but more illustrious for her undaunted spirit in adversity, than for her moderation in prosperity. She seems neither to have enjoyed the virtues, nor been subject to the weaknesses, of her sex, and was as much tainted with the ferocity, as endowed with the courage, of that barbarous age in which she lived." Yet, when we consider the uncertainty, which to an extent greater than at any other time, envelops this portion of English history, how vague and contradictory, above all, how partial, are the records of the Wars of the Roses — an obscurity more remark-



able in that it "falls upon us, just on the eve of the restoration of letters, and when the art of printing was already known in Europe,"—surely we may allow admiration for some of the events of her life, and pity for them all, to preponderate over the censure which her characteristics would probably seem less to merit, if more accurate sources of information as to motives, were available.

Could that fair form, long since dissipated into ashes, be restored by the magic art of the fabled resuscitator of Egypt's king, once more to revisit England's laughing isle, the influence of a refinement, which, notwithstanding adverse circumstances, must have been inherent in the possessor of so exquisite a face, might, in the expansion of a congenial atmosphere around "the fair daisy of Provence," have elicited the gentle beauty typified by the flower. It might have realized in her character, the tender radiance of the pearl—her emblem gem—like her, soft and yielding, though nursed amidst the billow and the storm, till hardened by exposure to the chilly blast; and, by an alchemy greater than all, have transformed her into the brightest ornament, in the coronet of female virtue!



## Isabella of Castile.

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Born 1451, died 1504.

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“SHOULD we seek,” says Mrs. Jameson (in her interesting “Memoirs of Female Sovereigns”), “through the pages of history for the portrait of a sovereign, such as the supreme Spirit of Good might indeed own for his vice-regent here on earth, where should we find one more blameless and beautiful than that of Isabella? Or should we point out a reign distinguished by great events,—events of such magnitude as to involve in their consequences, not particular kings and nations, but the whole universe, and future ages to the end of time, where could we find such a reign as that of Isabella, who added a new world to her hereditary kingdom? Or did we wish to prove that no virtues, talents, graces, though dignifying and adorning, a double crown and a treble sceptre; nor the possession of a throne fixed in the hearts of her people; nor a long course of the most splendid prosperity, could exempt a great queen from the burthen



of sorrow, which is the lot of her sex, and of humanity, where could we find an instance so forcible, as in the history of Isabella?"

The incidents and characteristics about to be portrayed, will prove the foregoing remarks to be not ill-founded, notwithstanding the general tendency of the mind, by a curious anomaly, to over-rate alike past heroes, and present public incidents. Indeed, the judgment of mankind is, in these particulars, especially to be distrusted, from prejudice in favour of the one, and to the depreciation of the other, acting upon the principles of a pride common to both; by which the individual is led to praise the past heroic character with which having no competitorship, he cannot lose by contrast (for we only praise as far as we can equal), and to exaggerate his own epoch, in which vanity would prompt him to behold himself, a prime mover or authority.

In the year 1469, while the wars of the Roses were still devastating our exhausted country, there was enacted in the fine old city of Valladolid, a *petite romance*, of which the results were to spread through the entire world, and not only to the limits of the known hemisphere, but into that as yet undiscovered. A young prince, who had performed the journey to the above town, disguised as a servant, and without state or escort, met here privately, the heiress pre-



sumptive of the neighbouring kingdom to his own ; an archbishop blessed the union of the pair, and but a day or two after the unostentatious nuptials, even to defray which, it had been necessary to borrow funds, they parted for an indefinite period, until events should be ripe for the declaration of a marriage which should strike rage, terror, and astonishment into numerous hearts, perhaps end for their territories and themselves, in desolation and death. Let us give a short description of this rash couple.

The bride was a girl of eighteen, if not positively beautiful, at least pleasing and attractive, beyond even what the magic pencil of that palmy age, generally confers. Her figure, gracefully formed, was neither above nor below, the medium altitude of her sex, and possessed an air of extreme dignity and ease. The auburn tint of her hair was accompanied, as it frequently is, by a complexion of dazzling fairness, and eyes of a deep azure, expressive of benevolence, yet not deficient in acumen ; but the predominating expression of the countenance declared decision and earnestness of purpose. Who, that has studied the human features, will deny that there is a distinct development appertaining to the large-minded and comprehensive thinker and observer, and the circumscribed follower in the world's footsteps, the trammelled actor after its



Procrustean code? This countenance that we are speaking of, declared, as fully as if its lines were words, the very emotions written there,—that its possessor belonged to that class which comprehends the bold exponents of untried means and circumstances, whether for good or evil.

The bridegroom, on his part, was scarcely less interesting; certainly as far removed from common-place, as his companion. His age was nearly the same, his person athletic, erect, and majestic. His forehead was as boldly proportioned, the actual outline of his visage more perfect than hers. When he spoke, the words came rapidly and easily, and the tones in which they were uttered, showed the speaker not less quick of apprehension and judgment. Yet, this attractive exterior concealed a soul far less noble of purpose, infinitely less scrupulous of means. Ambition was already too plainly declared, but the frank impulses of youth are scarcely ever thus early perverted to selfishness, or contracted into policy; and that must indeed be a thoroughly odious nature which bears the impress of aught unamiable or disingenuous upon an occasion like the present. The marriage was not only one of state advantage, to both parties, but a match of inclination, if not of love. The hand of the young Spanish *donna* had been sought by numerous applicants, and though it would appear that our fourth Edward, had some



years before, foregone an alliance himself with her, "to take to wife a widow woman" from among his subjects ("an unkindness for which the queen of Castile was ever turned in her heart from England"), yet this did not prevent his proposing his brother, the duke of Clarence (afterwards drowned in the butt of malmsey), for her husband ; while the king of Portugal, the Duc de Guienne (brother of the French king, Louis XI.), and several other notable competitors, were most earnest in endeavouring to secure her. The son of the king of Arragon, Don Ferdinand, who bore off the envied palm, had, in the moment of their marriage, created an indelible interest in her heart ; she not only loved, but thoroughly admired and appreciated his ease and brilliant talents ; and if, in after-years, she saw cause to question his motives,—occasionally to repudiate a participation in his craft,—and mark her disapprobation of his cruelty, there was at least no foundation for the assertion of Voltaire, that indifference swayed their actions relatively, so that they "neither loved nor hated each other, and lived together less as husband and wife, than as allies and independent sovereigns." Many instances are recorded of the attachment ever subsisting between them, and, even in her last moments, Ferdinand appears to have been so dear to her, that she exacted from him a promise never to marry again,—a vow destined, however, to



be broken from ambition and jealousy, though not from other impulses.

Before entering upon the history of Isabella's reign, it will be well rapidly to review the circumstances attending the state of Spain at the period, and the nature of such, particularly, as led to her somewhat unexpected succession, to the throne of Castile.

Insurrection, treason, and bloodshed unlimited, had marked, for a length of time, the annals of a country divided into four separate governments ;—those of the sister kingdoms, Castile and Arragon (alike in political institutions, and possessing the semblance of a monarchy, with the spirit of a republic); that of Navarre; and the Moorish realm of Granada, the last stronghold in Spain, of Mahommedan dominion. The Cortes, or parliament, including the representatives of the four orders in the state, was by law convoked every two years; and, when “once assembled, could not be dissolved by the king without its own consent. All questions of peace and war, the collection of the revenues, the enacting and repealing of laws, and the redressing of all grievances, depended upon this assembly. When they pronounced the oath of allegiance to a new king, it was in these striking terms: ‘ We, who are each of us as good as you, and who are altogether more powerful than you, promise obedience to your government,



if you maintain our rights and liberties ; but not otherwise.' It was a fundamental article in the constitution, that if the king should violate their privileges the people might legally disclaim him as their sovereign, and elect another in his place, though that other should be a heathen."

It will be thus seen, that the power of the sovereign bore a very disproportionate importance compared with that of his nobles. Their edicts were in effect absolute, and wholly without appeal, so that when Henry the Fourth, king of Castile, after exercising an ill-regulated and sullenly-suffered sway for some years, at length so far disgusted his nobility, that they determined to deprive him of his crown ; they summoned him in effigy, to a ceremony which they chose to consider as a solemn denunciation, and final sentence, of dethronement.

In the summer of the year 1465, "an assembly of the states was convened at Avila. An immense amphitheatre was constructed in a plain without the city, in the midst was placed an ill-carved wooden image, representing the king. It was seated on a throne, the diadem on its head, the sceptre in its hand, and the sword of justice girded to its side. In the midst of a solemn and breathless silence, the articles of accusation and condemnation were read aloud. At the conclusion of the first article, the archbishop of



Toledo advanced to the statue, and lifted the royal crown from its head. Upon the reading of the second article, the Count of Placentia snatched away the sword of justice. At the third article, the Count of Benaventé tore the sceptre from its hand. And, at the close of the last article, Don Diégo de Zuniga hurled the image from the throne ; and, as it rolled in the dust, the whole assembly gave a shout of execration. The next moment, the young Alphonso, brother to Henry, was raised to the vacant seat of power, and proclaimed king ; he was then about twelve years old. This sublime farce, or pantomime, or whatever else it may be called, had not the effect that it was expected to produce. Henry raised a large army, and opposed his brother's party ; but a negotiation was set on foot, and the Marquis of Villena, who was at the head of the malcontents, proposed, as one article of reconciliation, the marriage of Isabella with his brother Pachéco. The feeble Henry consented, but Isabella, then about fifteen, resisted the union, which she deemed degrading to her rank. She had also a personal dislike of the man proposed to her, and who, in spite of her open repugnance, persisted in pressing this marriage. The king, urged by Villena, was on the point of forcing his sister to the altar, when the sudden death of Pachéco released her from this hated alliance ; and, during the next two or three years, while her brothers Henry and



Alphonso were carrying on a furious civil war, she remained in retirement, quietly and unconsciously preparing herself to grace the crown for which they were contending. At length, the young Alphonso, whose spirit, bravery, and opening talents offered the fairest promise of happiness to the people, died at the age of fifteen, and the party of nobles opposed to Henry immediately resolved to place Isabella at their head. When their deputies waited on her with the offer of a crown, she replied, 'that it was not theirs to bestow, and that while her elder brother Henry existed, nothing should induce her to assume a title which was his by the laws of God and man.' At the same time, she claimed her right of succession, and the title of Princess of Asturias, which belonged to her as heiress of the throne. The chiefs were astonished and disconcerted by a reply which left them without an excuse for revolt. Having in vain endeavoured to overcome her scruples, they concluded a treaty with Henry, the most humiliating that ever was extorted from a father and a king. By this treaty, he acknowledged his daughter Joanna to be illegitimate, he consented to set aside her claims entirely, and declared Isabella his heiress and successor." \*

From these occurrences we gather, that Henry,

\* Mrs. Jameson.



scarcely a king in more than name, stood upon such very uncertain ground, that it was necessary to strengthen his position by all available means. It was his interest to throw every impediment in the way of his sister's marriage with the heir of Arragon, and when the news reached him that the Church had just united the youthful lovers, his rage knew no bounds ; reckless of treaties and edicts, he revoked the promises he had subscribed in Isabella's favour, and again declared his daughter Joanna, sole heiress to the kingdom. For a time, war again ravaged and desolated the realm, but Isabella at length proposed an interview with her brother at Segovia, when, making use of all the endearments as well of her sex, as of a sincerely tender heart, she exercised the power the strong mind ever holds over the weak, to promote a reconciliation. She so far succeeded, that, as she rode through the city, her brother, the king, was seen to walk beside her, holding the bridle of her palfrey ; and, shortly after, Ferdinand was summoned to Segovia, where he was welcomed by a succession of splendid fêtes, which appeared to promise a complete and lasting amnesty. Not long, however, did matters retain this favourable complexion ; the mind of Henry was afresh poisoned by evil tongues against his sister, and he planned a scheme for seizing and placing her in durance, which narrowly failed execution. A few months later, the



incurable malady under which the king had some time pined, terminated in his demise, and, as he left no will (a remarkable and unusual omission, the more peculiar from the disputed nature of the succession), Isabella received the reward of her patience, and found herself, with little difficulty, universally proclaimed Queen of Castile.

And now a question arose which, allowing due importance as well to the immemorial prejudices of her subjects as to the temper of the man with whom she was allied, might have shipwrecked the young queen's domestic happiness, as well as endangered her new dignity, had it not been once and for ever set at rest by the decisive, but gentle conduct of Isabella. Mary II. of England, under nearly similar circumstances, preserved peace by complete submission, and the total repudiation of a divided interest : Isabella managed to settle the delicate point, and reconcile her conjugal and regal duties without compromising either. When Ferdinand, dissatisfied with an arrangement (carried out, be it remembered, upon principles provided by the same marriage contract he had joyfully subscribed), which gave his consort the absolute powers of royalty, threatened to return to Arragon, Isabella tenderly assured him that his will was hers ; reminded him that their interests were identical ; and, by plainly showing that her elevation was rather nominal than real, placed



in so just a light the Castilian character, incapable of brooking any national dishonour, that the young husband's outraged dignity was calmed and satisfied. Another strong reason, which paternal affection could not fail to acknowledge, was successfully pleaded in prohibiting the exclusion of females from the succession. Isabella was already a mother, the little infant, named after her, who afterwards became Queen of Portugal, having been born about three years previous to this period, and, as she was the only child, and a princess, such a proceeding might probably bring the present line to a conclusion, and was therefore not to be contemplated.

All matters of precedence being thus happily arranged, tranquillity and comfort might have been expected to accompany the accession of the new sovereign, but it was not so ordained. The prelate who had assisted mainly in the elevation of Isabella, the old Archbishop of Toledo, jealous of the influence of any other upon her councils, retired from court, despite all the queen's efforts to detain him, and it speedily became apparent that he had embraced the interests of her rival niece, the Princess Joanna, who, recently affianced to Alfonso the Fifth of Portugal (Isabella's former suitor), found her cause thus warmly espoused by a nation proverbially detested by the Castilians; nor, as usual, was treachery wanting to aid the



efforts of the belligerent host. The declaration of this marriage, and the subsequent proclamation of Joanna and Alfonso, were succeeded by an invasion, for which Isabella and her husband were completely unprepared, hence, her active talents were called into immediate requisition. Writing despatches often during the entire night ; securing the allegiance of doubtful cities by personal visits, frequently performed on horseback, at a time when she was, from the weakness of her health, little able to bear such fatigues, thus she evinced the tactician, and showed the archbishop that the girl of whom he had once said contemptuously, "that he intended soon to make her lay down her sceptre and resume the distaff," was not to be so easily superseded. She made, however, one last attempt to win back her new enemy and former minister, for going to Toledo, she sent to him to express her desire of visiting him at his palace ; but the impracticable churchman, proof against her sweetness and condescension, replied to her messenger, that "if the queen entered by one door, he should go out at the other ;" a reply which at once abruptly terminated all further negotiations.

The siege of Toro (commencing under circumstances of signal disaster to the Castilian force), resulted in a complete victory. The people, satisfied of the military skill and personal prowess of their king and his



consort, vied, not only in proclaiming their own allegiance, but in bringing over, all the disaffected, to the conquering side ; and a few months after the day when Isabella, walking barefoot, had headed a procession to acknowledge her gratitude to Heaven for the advantageous termination of the battle, no garrison of any importance throughout the realm, hesitated to raise the royal standard. Their defeat was deeply felt by the rival prince and princess, who, after many vicissitudes, both sought refuge from the stormy results of their Castilian claims in the seclusion of the cloister. Joanna became a nun, and lived to an advanced age : she never entirely resigned her pretensions, subscribing herself "The Queen," and affecting regal state ; but her fiery and chivalric lover, just as he was making preparations for the abdication of his crown, fell ill at Cintra and died, without having assumed the habit of a Franciscan friar, which he meditated. Some time before this event, the demise of the king of Arragon had raised Ferdinand to his father's throne, and the kingdom was thus re-united, "after a separation of more than four centuries," with the still more important neighbouring one of Castile.

Isabella now seriously set herself to the work of reform and improvement she had so deeply at heart. Ferdinand and herself took care to revive the ancient custom prevalent in Eastern countries, of presiding



personally at the tribunal of judgment; and every Friday she might be seen dispensing justice, thus saving her subjects the more costly process of law. She superintended the fulfilment of all her own schemes, a method insuring their success; and was so impartial and spirited in her mode of legislature, that the nobles, whose children were reared under her own supervision, and within her very palace walls, and the body of the people, alike felt implicit confidence in her opinions. An anecdote which we give from Mr. Prescott's "History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella," took place about this time, and illustrates her characteristics :—

"During her husband's absence in Arragon in the spring of 1481, a quarrel occurred in the ante-chamber of the palace at Valladolid, between two young noblemen, Ramiro Nuñez de Guzman, lord of Toral, and Frederic Henriquez, son of the admiral of Castile, King Ferdinand's uncle. The queen, on receiving intelligence of it, granted a safe-conduct to the lord of Toral, as the weaker party, until the affair should be adjusted between them. Don Frederic, however, disregarding this protection, caused his enemy to be waylaid by three of his followers, armed with bludgeons, and sorely beaten, one evening, in the streets of Valladolid.

"Isabella was no sooner informed of this outrage



on one whom she had taken under the royal protection, than, burning with indignation, she immediately mounted her horse, though in the midst of a heavy storm of rain, and proceeded alone towards the castle of Simancas, then in the possession of the admiral, the father of the offender, where she supposed him to have taken refuge, travelling all the while with such rapidity, that she was not overtaken by the officers of her guard until she had gained the fortress. She instantly summoned the admiral to deliver up his son to justice; and, on his replying that 'Don Frederic was not there, and that he was ignorant where he was,' she commanded him to surrender the keys of the castle; and, after a fruitless search, again returned to Valladolid. The next day, Isabella was confined to her bed by an illness occasioned as much by chagrin as by the excessive fatigue she had undergone :—'My body is lame,' said she, 'with the blows given by Don Frederic in contempt of my safe-conduct.'

"The admiral, perceiving how deeply he and his family had incurred the displeasure of the queen, took counsel with his friends, who were led, by their knowledge of Isabella's character, to believe, that he would have more to hope from the surrender of his son than from further attempts at concealment. The young man was accordingly conducted to the palace by his uncle, the constable de Haro, who deprecated the



queen's resentment by representing the age of his nephew, scarcely amounting to twenty years. Isabella, however, thought proper to punish the youthful delinquent, by ordering him to be publicly conducted as a prisoner, by one of the *alcaldes* of her court, through the great square of Valladolid to the fortress of Arevala, where he was detained in strict confinement, all privilege of access being denied to him. And when at length, moved by the consideration of his consanguinity with the king, she consented to his release, she banished him to Sicily until he should receive the royal permission to return to his own country."

In proof of her courage, and the influence she possessed over the people, another incident may be cited from the same authority, the period of which was still earlier in her reign.

"The inhabitants, secretly instigated by the bishop of Segovia, and some of the principal citizens, rose against Cabrera, marquis of Moya, to whom the government of the city had been intrusted, and who had made himself generally unpopular by his strict discipline. They even proceeded so far as to obtain possession of the outworks of the citadel, and to compel the deputy of the *alcayde*, who was himself absent, to take shelter, together with the Princess Isabella, then the only daughter of the sovereigns, in



the interior defences, where they were rigorously blockaded.

“The queen, on receiving the tidings of the event at Tordesillas, mounted her horse, and proceeded with all possible despatch towards Segovia, attended by Cardinal Mendoza, the count of Benaventé, and a few others of her court. At some distance from the city she was met by a deputation of the inhabitants, requesting her to leave behind the count of Benaventé and the marchioness of Moya (the former of whom as the intimate friend, and the latter as the wife of the alcaide, were peculiarly obnoxious to the citizens), or they could not answer for the consequences. Isabella haughtily replied that ‘she was queen of Castile ; that the city was hers, moreover, by right of inheritance ; and that she was not used to receive conditions from rebellious subjects.’ Then pressing forward with her little retinue through one of the gates, which remained in the hands of her friends, she effected her entrance into the citadel.

“The populace in the meanwhile assembling in greater numbers than before, continued to show the most hostile dispositions, calling out ‘Death to the alcaide ! Attack the castle !’ Isabella’s attendants, terrified at the tumult, and at the preparations which the people were making to put their menaces into execution, besought their mistress to cause the gates



to be secured more strongly, as the only mode of defence against the infuriated mob. But instead of listening to their counsel, she bade them remain quietly in the apartment, and descended herself into the courtyard, where she ordered the portals to be thrown open for the admission of the people. She stationed herself at the further extremity of the area, and as the populace poured in, calmly demanded the cause of the insurrection. 'Tell me,' said she, 'what are your grievances, and I will do all in my power to redress them ; for I am sure that what is for your interest must be also for mine, and for that of the whole city.' The insurgents, abashed by the unexpected presence of their sovereign, as well as by her cool and dignified demeanour, replied, that all they desired was the removal of Cabrera from the government of the city. 'He is deposed already,' answered the queen, 'and you have my authority to turn out such of his officers as are in the castle, which I shall intrust to one of my own servants on whom I can rely.' The people, pacified by these assurances, shouted 'Long live the queen !' and eagerly hastened to obey her mandates."

In her own court, the conduct of Isabella merited the warmest praise. A "nursery of virtue and generous ambition," here she watched over the education of those among the daughters of the nobility who



were committed to her care, portioning them generously in marriage ; while her own example led them to regard with indifference the luxuries of life ; to be temperate, unostentatious, careless of extravagant dress or equipage, unless state occasions warranted a magnificence, which none more fully or easily than herself could assume. Early the victim of adversity, she had been thrown when very young into all the profligate levity of a corrupt court ; but the lessons she had imbibed from her mother shielded the princess from harm, and the queen retained the remembrance of their benefit, and strove to render it universal. But with these, Isabella had also received strong religious impressions, closely verging upon bigotry, and, unfortunately, far less happy in their result. Her own natural temperament was in all other matters strangely self-reliant, but in spiritual concerns completely subservient to the dicta of her religious advisers. When Talavera (afterwards archbishop of Granada, but then a simple monk), attended her upon the first occasion after being appointed her confessor, she observed that he remained seated while she bent before him for confession, and, whether to test his sentiments, or from actual annoyance at a proceeding doubtless unexpected, she reminded him "that it was customary for the priest also to kneel." "This," was the reply, "is the tribunal of God : I am



here as his representative ; it is only fitting that I should sit, and that your majesty should kneel before me." Upon which the queen questioned him no farther, but humbly went through her confession as he ordained it, so pleased with what she considered an evidence of his righteous independence, that she exclaimed at its close, "This is just the confessor I desired." Many years before the present epoch, a Dominican monk, named Torquemada, her then religious adviser, had either deluded or terrified her into a promise, that "she would devote her reign, if ever she became queen, to the extirpation of heresy, and the aggrandizement of the Catholic faith." The fulfilment of this fatal promise was now pressed upon her, but it is only due to her otherwise almost unblemished name, to state that the form in which it was proposed—the establishment of that fiendish tribunal, the masterpiece alike of ignorance, bigotry, and tyranny—the Inquisition—was so repellent to her gentle and magnanimous nature, that she refused to sanction it until months, even years, had elapsed. During these she had endured the importunities of the whole body of the clergy, those of her nearest personal friends, and perhaps still stronger arguments upon the part of her selfish husband, whose policy, even more than the bigotry of which he has generally been accused, urged him to "fasten its odious



yoke" upon both their dominions. Had she been capable of foreseeing the horrors this sanction entailed, she would rather have cut off her own right hand, than have permitted it to subscribe the petition which obtained the papal co-operation, and launched, even within the next year, thousands of miserable Jews, under the pretext of religious zeal, into eternity !

But we readily pass to events which, however melancholy in their detail, are yet less harrowing than those connected with the revelations of this horrible institution. The curtain is rising upon the conquest of Granada—the stage is covered with Arab warriors clad in their characteristic costume—they mix with Christian cavaliers in the knightly tourney, while down from their balconies, hung with rich silks and cloth of gold, glance the dark-eyed Moorish maidens. Anon, the scene changes its character, it is no longer a gentle feat of arms—it is a mortal combat—scimitars flash, lances and javelins are hurled along in rapid *mêlée*, ordnance peals, and fire and smoke obscure the palace court and the mountain fortress ; while through every scene of blood-red carnage or victorious triumph, glides the form of Ferdinand of Spain, and, woe to say, too often that of the nobler and gentler Isabella !

The city of Granada, so justly vaunted by its adoring people, lay completely in the centre of the Moorish



territories, sheltered by the Sierra Nevada, a chain of snowy mountains, delicious breezes from whose icy tops tempered the most sultry heat of the summer sun, and wafted salubrity and luxury through the vast halls of the beautiful city. The two lofty hills upon which Granada stood, divided by a valley, concealing within its bosom a swift-flowing river, were crowned respectively by the fortress of the Alcazaba, and the renowned palace (also a fortress), of the Alhambra. This immense building, planned and executed in the extreme of barbarous magnificence, was said by tradition to have been the work of a king, who, versed in the mysteries of alchemy and magic, had thus supplied the unlimited funds requisite to complete his undertaking. The vine clambered, hanging its dark treasures in rich profusion over the walls; the orange, citron, pomegranate, and mulberry, luxuriated within its gardens; and delicious fountains tossed their spray high into the air, or fell musically from carved images grouping the gilded and painted courts, whose airy porticoes and turrets, seemed the creation of a fairy hand. The city was surrounded by high walls, fortified by numerous towers, and beyond these stretched the fertile vega or plain, intersected by streams, and studded with groves, "rejoiced by the perpetual song" of the nightingale.

It appears to have been understood in the marriage



treaty of Isabella, that her husband was to lead her forces against the possessors of this enviable territory. It was deemed by all, and mostly by the queen, derogatory from the Castilian dignity, that its power should be resisted by the inhabitants of so narrow a tract lying between themselves and the sea ; religious feeling, too, was here also Isabella's excuse, and she entered enthusiastically into the war, which was to the last degree popular with her subjects. The Moors gaining notice of the warlike intentions of their neighbours, resolved to strike the first blow. Their king, Aben Hassen, assailed the fortress of Zahara, hitherto considered almost impregnable, in the middle of the night, took the garrison prisoners, or put them to the sword, an outrage which was speedily and terribly avenged by an attack upon Alhama, a town filled with incredible riches, within a short distance of the capital, belonging to the Moors. This ancient and stately city was reduced to ashes by the Christians, its wealth formed booty for the soldiers, and the melancholy romance translated by Lord Byron, with its lament, "*Ay de mi Alhama*"—"Woe is me Alhama!" composed by one of the Moors shortly after the catastrophe, testifies the deep grief and dejection elicited by its fall. But Alhama had nearly been retaken, and Isabella herself found it necessary to fan into flames, by her own enthusiasm,



the spirits of the Castilians, terrified by the vicinity of the Moorish king. Upon taking possession of the city, she not only furnished the churches with plate and other requisites of her faith, but herself worked a covering of elaborate embroidery to decorate the principal altar. After this period Isabella invariably accompanied Ferdinand in his campaigns: she was said to be the "soul of this war," and appears to have regarded it in a wholly conscientious point of view. Animating and encouraging the wavering or dispirited, she was everywhere active and vigilant, and so wrought upon the "grandees," when fatigued and all but retiring, that, "mortified at being outdone in zeal for the holy war by a woman, they eagerly collected their forces, and returned across the borders to renew hostilities."

The earliest idea of providing camp hospitals emanated from the pity and tenderness of Isabella; frequently visiting the sick in person, and carrying with her liberal supplies of money and clothes, she furnished them with medicine and attendants at her own charge, and the tents appropriated to the wounded, were known as the "queen's hospitals." She was repaid by the most romantic and chivalrous attachment.

Our limits will not permit us to do more than glance at the various sieges and surrenders, which



resulted in the complete destruction of the Moors, and the capture of their cherished metropolis. Velez, Malaga, and Baza, successively succumbed, until the cross was raised above the towers of the Alhambra. At Malaga an attempt was made to assassinate the sovereigns, and the queen is considered, by her historian, to have been inspired from above in averting the threatened catastrophe. A Moor named Agerbi undertook the crime, and being brought to the tent of the king, professed to have secrets of importance to communicate. Ferdinand was taking a *siesta*, and the queen refused to awaken him, desiring that the Moor should be conducted for the present, into the adjoining tent, where were seated, conversing together, the Marchioness de Moya, Isabella's early friend, and Don Alvaro, the son of the duke of Braganza. The assassin deeming he was in the presence of Ferdinand and Isabella, drew a dagger from the folds of his *albornoz*, and darting on the Portuguese, wounded him on the head ; then turning upon the marchioness, he aimed a blow at her, which was fortunately rendered abortive by some heavy gold ornaments she wore ; and the guards warned of the danger by her screams, rushed in, and despatched the intended murderer. Shortly afterwards when the city capitulated, Ferdinand and Isabella entered it in state, and a multitude of Christian captives, heavily manacled and wasted with



confinement, were set at liberty, while their Moorish detainers were, in their place, condemned to the horrors of slavery. It is only fair to state, that Isabella remonstrated strongly against the summary method of punishment employed for their unfortunate patriotism, but a stain rests upon her memory, for not using her authority for its total prevention.

In the year 1487, shortly after the king and queen, together with their children, had paid a visit to Arragon, to insure the proper succession of their only son Prince John, the royal army marched to reconnoitre Baza ; but it was not until the December of 1489 that Isabella, who had arrived at the request not only of her husband, but of the whole body of the troops, accompanied by a glittering train of cavaliers and ladies, took possession of the conquered fortress ; and Almeria, with its Moorish sovereign, El Zagal, soon followed the example of submission. Throughout the long period of these successive sieges, Isabella had displayed her usual energy, suffering fatigues, furnishing funds raised by personal sacrifice, and ever restoring enthusiasm by the quick sympathies of her woman's heart, while she directed the movements of her forces with all the comprehensive intelligence of the other sex. "The chivalrous heart of the Spaniard," says Mr. Prescott, "did homage to her as to his tutelar saint ; and she held a control



over her people such as no man could have acquired in any age,—and probably no woman, in an age and country less romantic.”

In the April following, the young Isabella, Infanta of Spain, was betrothed by her parents to Alonzo, heir of Portugal ; the ceremony took place at Seville, and the tourneys held in its honour were succeeded by others in sight of the besieged, when within a few weeks Isabella—often to be seen at the head of her troops habited in complete armour, like her prototype, Zenobia, of old—encamped beneath the battlements of Granada. A narrow escape of her life occurred during this campaign. She was lodged in a superb pavilion belonging to the marquis of Cadiz, and owing to the carelessness of an attendant, a lamp placed near the hangings, set not only them, but those of the adjoining tents, in flames. The queen and her children escaped with difficulty ; she sprang hastily from her bed, her first thought being for her husband. Ferdinand had armed, and put himself at the head of his troops, apprehending a sally,—none however was attempted, and no other mishap resulted beyond the loss of much valuable property in the conflagration. The accident suggested to Isabella the idea of building a regular city, to guard her soldiers from similar disasters, and provide them with good winter quarters. This extraordinary task was per-



formed with wondrous celerity ; like the magic palace of Aladdin, the town of Santa Fé arose in the sight of the besieged. Though originally intended to be named after herself, the idea was overruled by the pious queen's gratitude to that Providence which had sustained her arms throughout the war ; it is the only city in Spain, writes a Castilian author, "that has never been contaminated by the Moslem heresy." The performance of this work by the Spaniards, threw the devoted Moors into utter despair ; for in it they perceived the determination of their opponents never to relinquish the rigorous blockade they had instituted, until Granada had fallen. The surrender of the city was further precipitated by the fears entertained for the safety of Abdallah, the Moorish monarch, who had entered into unpopular conditions with the conquerors. The last scene of a war, which had endured nearly the same period as the famous one of Troy, was now to be enacted, and everything that could heighten its effect was carefully arranged by the Castilians. The court had assumed mourning for the accidental death of Alonzo, their young Infanta's bridegroom, but it was hastily thrown off, and festive apparel substituted. Ferdinand and Isabella, attended by a gorgeous retinue, took up their station at Armilla, and waited with impatience until the large silver cross, the "great standard of this



Crusade," should be elevated on the Torre de la Vella, or watch-tower. One prolonged shout greeted its appearance, it was closely followed by the pennon of St. James, and the royal banner of Castile ; and at these " signals of possession " the sovereigns, followed by the whole assembled host, fell on their knees, " giving God glory " for their triumph. Not far from the Hill of Martyrs they were met by the royal Moor Abdallah (or Boabdil), who would have prostrated himself at their feet, but was prevented by the courtesy of his conquerors. Here the unfortunate monarch received back, from the hands of the queen, his son, hitherto detained as a hostage, and delivering in return the keys of the Alhambra to Ferdinand, with " an air of mingled melancholy and resignation," they were handed on to Isabella, and then to her son Prince John. After so doing, he moved forward with a dejected air to rejoin his family ; but upon reaching the elevated ground commanding a last view of his beloved Granada, the heart of the poor king, overwhelmed by emotion, found relief in a torrent of weeping ; and it was only when his high-spirited mother, Ayxa la Horra, reminded him " that it was useless to lament as a woman what he had failed to defend like a man," that he had courage to leave the spot, called to this day, in commemoration of this sad farewell—*El ultimo suspiro del Moro*—" The last sigh



of the Moor." The gate through which he issued from Granada was, at his request, walled up, that no other might pass through it. Abdallah pined to the end of his days, in hopeless misery, for his departed kingdom, and ultimately threw away a life he no longer cared to preserve, in the support of an African kinsman, in Morocco.

It was in the midst of all the joy and triumph attending the downfall of the Crescent, that Isabella found time to attend to projects, which, scarcely proficient enough in science to comprehend fully, she yet was led by "the spirit of intelligence and energy" to patronize, with the whole fervour of her generous nature. "A man obscure and but little known, followed at this time the court." Stigmatized alternately as a "dreaming speculator,"—"an indigent and threadbare applicant in the royal antechamber,"—"a nameless stranger,"—poverty, neglect, reproach, ridicule, and disappointment, had alike failed to shake his perseverance, or lead him to concessions, he deemed unworthy the importance of his undertaking. And he was right, for this man was no other than Christopher Columbus. We would we had space to note with rapid pen the history of one indeed a hero, through all its scenes of vicissitude and distress, when, after being regarded so long with coldness, the earnest rhetoric of Isabella's early and fast friend, Beatrice











de Moya, kindled her warm participation in those researches which were afterwards to reflect upon her so much fame, and she exclaimed enthusiastically, "I undertake the enterprise for my own crown of Castile, and will pledge my jewels to raise the necessary funds." But the discoveries of Columbus so far only enter into the history of Isabella, as they are descriptive of the maternal interest she took in the welfare and freedom of the Indians, and of the extreme regard which, despite all the fluctuations of opinion, all the ingratitude of others, she felt towards one who returned it so fully, that having "borne firmly the stern conflicts of the world, yet, on beholding the queen's emotion, he could no longer suppress his own." When received by her in the Alhambra after a temporary misunderstanding, he was unable to utter a word for the violence of his tears and sobbings, and so intense was the affliction with which he learned that she was, to use his own words, "received into glory, and beyond the cares of this rough and weary world," that its impression never was obliterated up to the last moments of a life, prolonged but a short space, beyond that of his royal mistress. His was a character which, "whether we contemplate it in its public or private relations, in all its features wears the same noble aspect. It was in perfect harmony with the grandeur of his plans, and their



results, more stupendous than those which, Heaven has permitted any other mortal, to achieve."

We have already lingered too long over the records of this "purest-minded," and large-hearted princess. Isabella has possessed so many chroniclers, that it is no easy matter to reject the numerous anecdotes and details of her existence, and pages might easily swell into chapters, yet contain nothing irrelevant to her history. Touch we briefly, therefore, a few remaining incidents, which, for the most part, are descriptive only of the grief and disappointment, no woman ever less deserved to experience. Devoted to her children, she was most unfortunate in their destinies: all gave early indication of talent, and she had educated them entirely upon a system of her own, proved, by its results, to have been worthy the commendation it received from contemporary writers. The early death of her adored Isabella, the first and fairest of her house; of her only son, the promising Prince John; and the settled insanity of Joanna (who had married the archduke, Philip of Austria, and was mother of Charles V.); together with the widowhood of our own queen consort, Catherine of Arragon, the first of Henry the Eighth's six wretched wives, who was the infanta, Catalina, youngest child of the queen;—these afflictions all accelerated the death of the tender and susceptible Isabella. Fever con-



sumed her frame ; her appetite failed her ; and it was evident to all, although she tried to give audience as usual, and resisted with enduring fortitude the inroads of the disease, that, “ while the powers of her mind seemed to brighten, those of her body declined.” Conscious of her approaching fate, while prayers were put up everywhere, pilgrimages and processions of daily and hourly occurrence for the recovery of the beloved queen, Isabella calmly employed herself in dictating a will, which proves how consistent were her schemes of benefit for her people, how devoted her affection for her consort, and their remaining offspring. In it she recommended to others, “ the same conjugal harmony, which had ever subsisted between her and her husband,” beseeching her children to show the latter, all the respect and love “ due to him, beyond all other parents, for his eminent virtues ;” but while expressing her sincere conviction that his past conduct afforded a sufficient guarantee for his faithful administrations, “ required for her beloved Castile’s security, the customary oath from him, on entering the responsibilities of the office.” She then provided for the personal revenues of Ferdinand, “ beseeching the king, my lord, that he will accept all my jewels, or such as he shall select ; so that, seeing them, he may be reminded of the singular love I always bore him while living, and that I am now waiting for him in a better



world ; by which remembrance he may be encouraged to live the more justly and holily in this." Finally she ordered her remains to be transported to Granada, to the Franciscan monastery of Santa Isabella, in the Alhambra, and there deposited in a low and humble sepulchre, bearing nothing more than a simple inscription ; "unless," she goes on to say, "the king, my lord, should prefer a sepulchre in some other place ; then my will is, that my body be there transported and laid by his side, that the union we have enjoyed in this world, and through the mercy of God may hope again for our souls in heaven, may be represented by our bodies in the earth." Isabella's desire was fulfilled ; the remains of Ferdinand rest beside hers in the cathedral church of Granada. But a magnificent mausoleum of white marble was raised above them by their grandson, Charles the Fifth.

It rarely happens to the historian to be able to chronicle goodness, and greatness, alike eminently conspicuous in the character of a single being. The one so generally detracts from the other, that greatness draws for its expansion upon principle, or goodness in the fear of becoming intemperate, lapses into infirmity. Hence the combination of queenly energy, with womanly mildness, the being

— "not without ambition, but without  
The illness should attend it."



—are rare and sterling excellencies, which when recognised, make our admiration grow into love, and merge even envy itself, in the desire of extending the influence of the individual. It is the tendency also of success, to engender self-opinion, and domestic amiability and tenderness are not seldom sacrificed to the hardening effects of public astuteness and policy. Yet the disposition of Isabella was so happily moulded, that independence and resolution never degenerated into obduracy, nor did the cares of a state render her oblivious of the duties of a parent. The facile adaptation of God's arrangement physically, was in her, elaborated mentally :—a limb can be softened into a support, or strained into a resistance,—a cloud may shelter or chill,—and that mind is of the finest organization, which is equally comprehensive as simple, and which, without extravagance or effort, can, like the trunk of the elephant, snap an oak, or pick up the smallest straw.



## Catherine de Medici.

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Born 1519, died 1588.

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WE approach a princess of a very different temperament to that of the good and gracious Isabella. Alike in early vicissitude, in elevated position, in natural talent and personal charm, these two women were still more similar in the intuitive tendency they possessed towards bigotry: but here the resemblance ended. Isabella, gentle, tender-hearted, and lenient, abhorred the very name of violence in carrying out the principles she deemed it her duty to disseminate. Catherine, on the other hand, loved, for their own horror's sake, scenes of persecution and bloodshed; crafty and dissimulating while Isabella was candid and generous, she was as cold-blooded in calculating projects, as she was unscrupulous in selecting means. In one, the plague-spot of fanaticism was minute, though hideous, scarcely marring the beautiful proportions of the soul it inhabited; in the other, it became a giant demon, swallowing up every human impulse to



feed its horrible appetite. Talent and crime had set their seal upon the beautiful infant that Madeline de la Tour, the duchess of Lorenzo de Medici, pressed to her maternal heart. That infant was destined to be an instrument of woe and destruction here on earth. "Like some minister of an angry deity," says Wraxall, in his "Memoirs of the House of Valois," "Catherine appears to have been occupied only in effecting the ruin of her people, and to have marked her course with carnage and devastation."

The animosity of the Florentines to the house of Lorenzo de Medici, exposed the childhood of his daughter to considerable peril. Not only did the faction deprive her of the possessions of her family, but it succeeded in shutting her up in a monastery. Well would it have been for the world, and not less for herself, if the cruel suggestion of Baptista Cei, a determined enemy of the Medici, had been adopted, who, at the time she was eleven years old, proposed to expose her to the fire of the imperial artillery ; but she was fated to wear out a long life of misdeeds and ambition, and to expire at last, with only the fearful tormentor at her side, of her own fatal, though perverted conscience !

At the age of fourteen, Catherine de Medici was married to Henry, duke of Orleans, second son of Francis I. The ceremony took place at Marseilles,



and the king of France himself, attended to give the paternal, while the papal benediction was also bestowed in person. Even at this early period she seems to have laid the foundation, of the influence she afterwards acquired, over the mind of her father-in-law ; and although the fancy of her husband was already captivated in another quarter, she conducted herself in such a manner, as to produce upon him the most pleasing impression of her mildness of temper, as well as beauty of person. It has been observed that, in Catherine, "nature had combined all the virtues as well as vices of her family:" certainly she inherited everything that was beautiful or majestic in aspect. Her complexion was delicately fair ; her eyes fine, and beaming with vivacity ; while her queenly form and bearing were still further enhanced by the appliances of a costume constantly varying, yet always adapted with such perfect skill to set off her charms, that each succeeding one, appeared to be equally becoming.

If Catherine's temper (apparently submissive in the last degree at this period of her career, but secretly chafed into malignity), was soured by her husband's neglect and her rival's influence, the evil was increased by the circumstance of her possessing no children to elicit the tenderness, which was doubtless latent in some corner of her heart. For ten years no heir arrived to the throne presumptive of



France ; but, at the end of that time, a little prince was born, to the great satisfaction of a numerous party in the state. Francis I. dying, she was crowned at St. Denis with her husband ; and though she was compelled to see the king's favourite, Diana de Poitiers, still pre-eminent as well in political influence as in his heart, Catherine submitted patiently, assured that no rivalry could take from her the title of queen, and the still more interesting one, of mother to the future sovereign. Shortly after, her importance was augmented by a brief regency in the absence of Henry in Italy, though the authority of her administration was more ostensible than real.

The detestable policy of Catherine had hitherto obtained no opportunity for exercise ; nor had her ambition scope for display while occupying the position she at present held. But an event was at hand, which enabled her to throw off the constraint she had placed so rigorously upon herself, and to assert the energy and shrewdness of her nature. Peace being proclaimed, and the period fixed for the nuptials of the French Princess Elizabeth with the widower of Queen Mary, Philip II. of Spain, a tournament was given in honour of both events. In this tournament King Henry took part, and having distinguished himself with several opponents, wished to break lances with a gentleman, celebrated for his skill and courage,



a captain of the Scotch life-guards, named Montgomery. The challenge was reluctantly accepted. The queen also endeavoured to dissuade Henry from the combat, sharing apparently Montgomery's presentiment respecting its result; but the king was resolute, and advanced, even with his visor lifted, to the attack. In the force of the shock, the helmet of the king received the lance of the count, and broke it, and he was thrown violently from his seat. Eleven days he lay senseless and speechless, and then expired of the injury inflicted on the brain, where an incurable abscess had formed from the splintered spear. The death of Henry filled the court with consternation, and contending interests speedily began to develop themselves, no longer held in check by his supremacy. Little doubt of Catherine's intentions long remained. The Duchesse de Valentinois (Diana), who had been commanded to retire from court at the approach of the king's death, beheld herself now neglected and abandoned, while the queen swayed the opinions of the former admiring crowd of courtiers. The widow remained near the lifeless remains scarcely long enough for common decency, thus violating an usage almost invariably observed among the queens of France. Her son, the present monarch, was of most importance to the ambitious queen-mother, and she had followed him to the Louvre, contenting herself



with leaving orders, that no magnificence should be spared, in the appointment of the funeral obsequies.

The political talents of Catherine, indeed, however pre-eminent, were at fault in the first moments of her new power, and she committed an error in more matters than one. The compact between herself and the Guises, of whom she felt a mortal dread, which was mutual, produced little deference to her opinions, though she had placed herself considerably in their power. As far as possible, however, Catherine retrieved her false step, and soon all present plans were arrested by a new catastrophe, in the demise of the young king.

This prince, married to Mary Stuart in 1558, scarcely survived his marriage two years, or his accession to the throne eighteen months. He was of a constitution and mind alike weak, and Catherine seems for a considerable period before his death, to have been warily anticipating that event. Ambition nearly stifled the throbbings of maternal tenderness, when news were brought her that he had expired at Orleans, whither he had been sent, in the hope of benefit from change of air. Mary (a "sorrowful young widow" of eighteen) was commended to her mother-in-law's care, with almost the latest breath of Francis. The Guises at his interment manifested considerable indifference ; they remained, as they said,



to console their niece (the queen of Scotland), instead of paying the respect of their presence, at a ceremonial, which was so differently managed to the funeral of Catherine's husband, that its meanness corroborated the latent surmises, entertained both within and without the court, as to the probability of his having been poisoned. The youthful Mary was, however, no favourite with the queen-mother, nor had been, since an inadvertent boast respecting her descent from a "hundred monarchs," which Catherine chose to construe into a reflection upon the parentage of the Medici, a family of Florentine merchants.

Previous to the death of Francis, the queen-mother had so craftily played off the rival factions, each against the other, that she had obtained a written promise from the king of Navarre, to whom the regency belonged as first prince of the blood, to yield his claim in her own favour. The Guises had urged upon her the murder of this prince, as well as that of the prince of Condé, but other advisers decided her upon sparing them, and instead of their destruction, a negotiation was entered into between the former and herself, while, upon the demise of the king, she occupied herself in bringing over the Constable de Montmorenci, a dangerous opponent, to her side, and completed the success of her endeavour, by the expedient of recalling **Madame de Valentinois** to court, to essay on the con-



stable her powers of rhetoric and persuasion. Thus Catherine experienced but little difficulty in declaring herself regent of France, during the minority of her second son Charles, which she intended should be made as protracted as possible.

The demon of religious dissension now raged with frantic violence. Catherine affected to entertain strong partiality towards the Calvinists, but her profound and subtle hypocrisy concealed very different convictions. When the conciliatory edict in favour of the Huguenots was drawn up at the Château of Amboise, it had been at her suggestion; and on the young and inexperienced Francis expressing his surprise at being thus made to protect persons who had recently been denounced as his mortal enemies, she had held the pen to him, saying, "You are not of an age, my son, to judge of the important scope of this act of clemency,—you will understand it hereafter." The reformers, unsuspecting of the snare laid for them, had blindly fallen into the toils; but the massacre of the unfortunates who had been attracted to the court by this lenity, a massacre which the queen-mother and her children eagerly witnessed from the windows of the château, had taught them distrust of Catherine's fair promises. A rupture between the contending factions was now anticipated: the prince of Condé demanded justice and reparation for some out-



rages committed on the Calvinist inhabitants of Vassy, in Champagne, and the Duc de Guise was summoned to appear alone to answer the accusation, a mandate he obeyed by arriving at Paris, accompanied by 1200 men. An effusion of blood at this time, nevertheless, was neither her wish nor her interest, and she endeavoured, by preserving her apparent neutrality, to delay the commencement of open hostilities. She in secret summoned Condé to her aid, therefore, at Fontainebleau, whither she had retired with the young Charles ; but the king of Navarre and the other confederate lords, took advantage of the opportunity to make themselves masters of the royal person, and Catherine was reluctantly obliged to accompany her son to the capital. This was the commencement of a frightful civil war, in the course of which the king of Navarre perished at the siege of Rouen, while the head of the rival faction, the Duc de Guise, fell shortly after at Orleans by the dagger of an assassin. It was wholly indifferent to Catherine, at this time tormented by few religious opinions, and it would seem, never troubled even by the remote phantom of a conscience, whether the prince or the duke gained the day, whether the Romanist or Huguenot faith were triumphant. Anxious only for the possession of supreme power, her weariless artifice and sagacious penetration were not more remarkable than the heroism she constantly evinced, whenever



danger was near. The peril of her person affrighted her as little, as that of her soul. "Why should I spare myself more than you?" she replied, to the solicitations of those around her, when besieging Rouen; "is it that I have less courage, or less interest in the event? It is true that I have less personal force, but in resolution of mind I am not your inferior;" and the soldiers, with whom grandeur of sentiment ever carries adoration, dignified her after the Roman fashion, with the title of "Mater Castrorum."

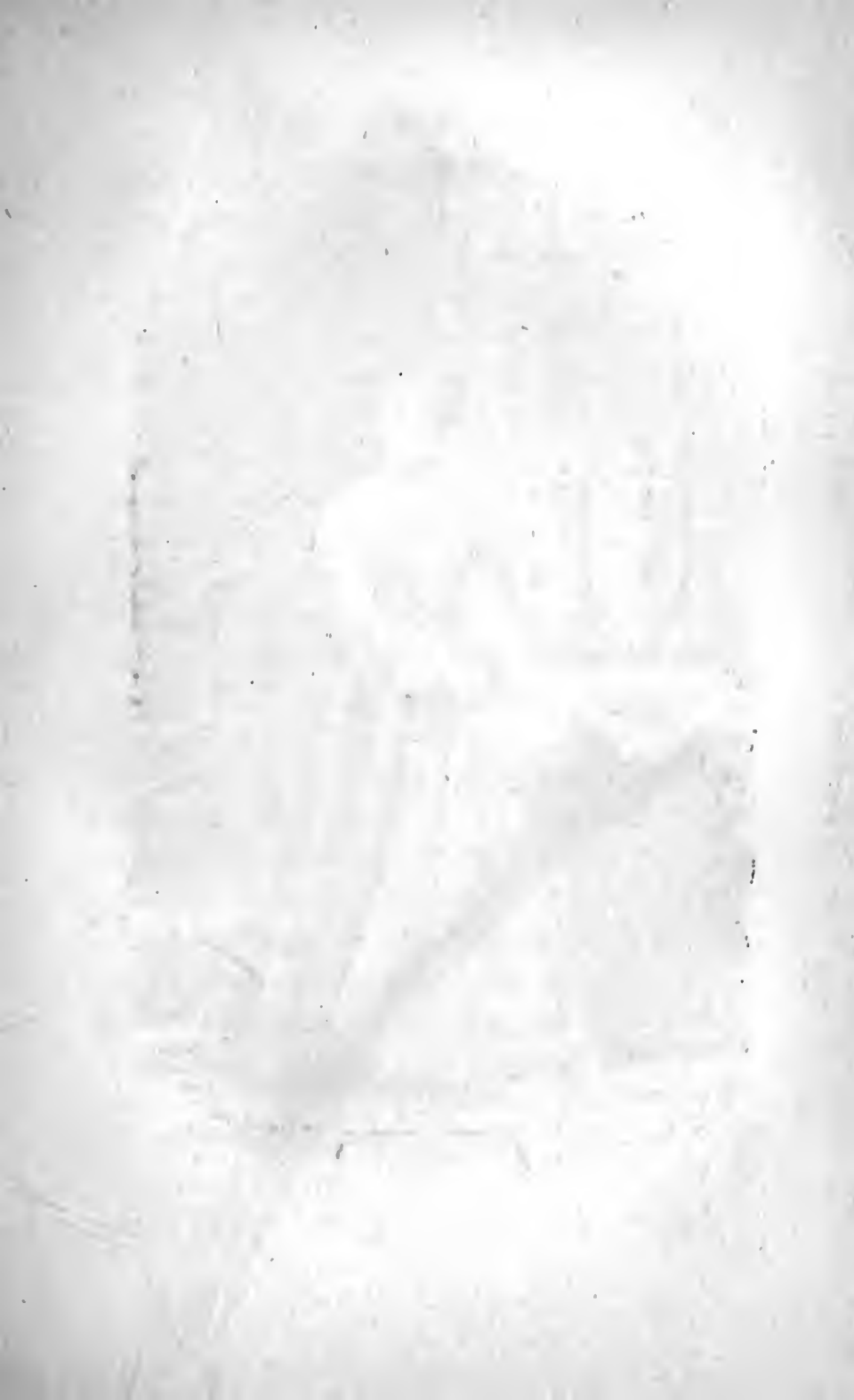
Upon the death of Guise, Catherine, dreading lest she might be suspected of contriving it, caused herself to be interrogated before the nobility at his bedside; it was he who had alone kept her intriguing genius in check, and she now found herself without a competitor, though for a period it served her purpose to promote tranquillity, by overtures tolerably favourable to the Huguenots. But she was by no means passive during the short lull which preceded the tempest; and possessed of discrimination which enabled her to judge of, and turn to account the weaknesses of others, Catherine, "suited to the character of the victim the proper temptation," sapped the strength of her opponents, and prepared the way for future triumphs. Upon Charles attaining his majority therefore, she managed so well that he refused to govern unassisted by herself; and when she planned a progress through



his dominions, ostensibly under the veil of pleasure, but secretly to estimate the real strength of the Huguenots, he assented without hesitation. Previous to this period, Catherine ordered the destruction of the Palace of the Tournelles, and built in its stead the Tuileries, which she embellished with the laborious designs of all the first artists of the day. The refinement of her taste, and the magnificence of her conceptions, surpassed the efforts of previous ages, and if she had been actuated by different principles, her name would in this respect have merited immortal honour.

While absent with the king upon the royal progress, the noted meeting at Bayonne took place between himself and his sister, the Spanish queen, which was planned and executed with so many and various accessories of splendour. Davila affirms that the extermination of Protestantism was here agreed upon. Certainly it was, that during these scenes of pleasure, Catherine planned the schemes of carnage which her cruelty and ambition prompted, and, in conference with the duke of Alva, sanctioned the infractions of the edicts in favour of the reformed, which now began to be of daily occurrence in the provinces. The temporary opposition of the latter body was followed by an insidious peace ; and the fatal day of Jarnac, later on, by the death of the prince of Condé, the hero and leader of the Calvinist troops,











terminated, though not for long, the efforts of the persecuted Protestants. Charles himself, jealous of the rising influence of his brother Henry, duke of Anjou, took the field in person, and Catherine, preferring the subservient indolence of her younger son, offered no opposition to a conduct which might ensure her a still more facile pupil.

At this period an union was proposed by Catherine, much against the inclination of the princess, between her daughter Margaret and Henry, the young king of Navarre. Another also was attempted between our Queen Elizabeth and the French monarch, but with so little success, that the queen-mother turned her attention to the daughter of the emperor Maximilian, and succeeded in securing her as a wife for her son.

A second scene of magnificence, heightened by the usual tasteful application of ancient fiction and classical allegory, took place within the charmed circle of Paris. The extraordinary and universal genius of the queen-mother shone, as usual, pre-eminently. It "comprehended everything in its embrace, and was equally distinguished in the cabinet or at a banquet, whether directed to the destruction or the delights of mankind; in her, qualities the most opposite and discordant in their nature, seem to have been blended. She was enabled, by the universality of her talents, to pass



with the easiest transition from the horrors of war to the dissipations of indolence and peace ; and we are forced to lament that a capacity so exalted should, from the principles by which it was actuated, produce only more general and lasting evils." While Jupiter was represented in the person of the king, and Juno in that of the queen, the Huguenots were pourtrayed by Typhon and the giants ; and even the fatal consummation of St. Bartholomew was significantly intimated by more than one device. The whole attention, indeed, of Catherine, was devoted to the allurements of the Huguenots into her toils. Her daily efforts corrupted every good impulse in the young king's heart, perverted his moral sense, and engendered a thirst for blood, which her lessons speedily taught him to conceal, under the mask of profound dissimulation.

The catastrophe drew on. Pope Pius V., who had hitherto refused to sanction the marriage of Margaret of Valois with a Huguenot, was brought to consent by a hint of the intentions, it was devised to carry out. The bridegroom and his mother consequently arrived in Paris ; but, in the midst of preparations for the approaching ceremony, the queen of Navarre was seized with a sudden indisposition, which terminated fatally within a few days. Again the queen-mother was suspected ; for it was notorious that she was versed in all the arts of poisoning ;—from conveying the



deadly drug in a glass of cold water demanded to slake the thirst induced by the tennis-court, or administering it to the young cavalier in the white gloves he drew on to attend a court festival,—to the bouquet the bride placed within her bosom, as she prepared to kneel before the altar. This sudden incident aroused the fears of the party to which the deceased belonged. The Admiral Coligny, successor to Condé in the command of their forces, who had been seduced by almost over-acted demonstrations of favour and affection, actually sufficient to excite the distrust of the Romanist party, dreading treachery, though irresolute, had retired to his castle of Chatillon, still delaying his appearance at court, whence fresh deceptions daily emanated, to allure him. The marriage was made the pretext to invite to Paris as many as practicable of the adverse party, and Coligny was, beyond all others, entreated to be present, by a letter from King Charles himself, the bearer of which was the unsuspecting Teligny, the admiral's own son-in-law. Completely put off his guard by the Judas-like endearments with which this traitor greeted the man he termed "father;" by the restoration of his former honours, and by the apparent safeguard to the cause, assured by the marriage of the king's sister with one of themselves, Coligny not only yielded, but used all his influence to procure the appearance of the rest of his party



at the ceremony. The inhabitants of Rochelle, notwithstanding the seeming fair weather, fearing a storm, implored the admiral to return to them; but they were forced to be content with his reply, "that, though aware of his peril, he would rather suffer himself to be dragged through the streets of Paris, than renew the horrors of a fourth civil war, and re-plunge his unhappy country in blood." The Maréchal de Montmorenci, less heroic, but more prudent, obtained permission, under pretence of illness, to retire to his castle, thus averting the threatened calamity from his family and himself. Blosset and Languiron followed his example, believing justly that treachery had marked them for victims, if they remained.

On Monday, the 18th of August, 1572, the union of Henry of Navarre and the Princess Margaret was celebrated. During the entire week the rejoicings were prolonged, and bustle and festivity reigned throughout the city of Paris. But, as the vine-crowned heights of the smiling Sicilian paradise, luxuriant with fertility, prosperous, happy, and breathing peace, conceal the fearful crater, beneath which lie mouldering elements of restless fire, shortly to issue thence in universal devastation,—so the gay revels of the fête but thinly glosed over the mine below, and many there were in the capital who dreaded the minutest spark falling from



some untoward circumstance, would fire the train whose vicinity they even then suspected. But, for the most part, confidence prevailed, and when, on Friday morning, the poor old admiral left his sovereign at the Louvre and returned towards his own residence, he little anticipated that the arquebuss of an assassin would assail him ; it failed to kill him indeed, but maimed for ever those limbs which had done such good service to the great cause.

Before the attendants of Coligny could enter the house which their master, amidst all the weakness occasioned by the sudden effusion of blood, indicated, the bravo of the Italian queen-mother had escaped to the royal stables, where a fleet horse awaited him to ensure his escape. It is believed the king knew nothing of the plan, and that it emanated solely from her ; the intent being to cause, by the assassination, suspicion to fall upon the admiral's enemies, the Guises, when a popular tumult would afford the best possible excuse for a general Huguenot massacre. But Coligny still lived, and the double plot of this perfidious woman was, for the time, cancelled. The king had testified great grief and indignation on learning the event, and now paced up and down his apartment, muttering to himself, in which state the wily Catherine found him. First, she would have justified the conduct of Guise, whom she felt assured her son would



suspect ; then finding him impracticable, she quietly shifted her position, and agreed with him as to the expediency of arrest and punishment pursuing the offender. Navarre and Condé now entered full of just complaints. They expressed their determination to leave Paris ; and this threw Charles into a still more fearful paroxysm of rage. D'Aubigné says, "The king uttered the most passionate and unheard-of invectives, exclaiming, that it was not the admiral only, it was he who was wounded." And the queen echoed his frantic exclamations, though she trembled with agitation lest her own share in the outrage should be brought to light.

Far more extensive indeed, than the mere destruction of the Huguenots, was the project this barbarous creature had conceived at the present moment, and which she intended should comprise the murders of the Guises, Montmorencies, and other members of her own persuasion. But she simulated successfully the emotions of the offended queen, jealous of the honour of her ministers, and deeply attached to the person of the admiral; so that accompanying Charles to the former's bedside, she remained there for the space of an hour exerting all her blandishments, until, after Coligny had spoken to the king for a few moments in an under tone, while she gratified him by retiring to the other extremity of the chamber, she broke up the interview



by an affected fear that the admiral's strength would be exhausted. The conscious guilt of the queen-mother caused her to interrogate the king with extreme anxiety, upon the subject of Coligny's private communication to him. He replied with an imprecation, not noticing her alarm, "Coligny has counselled me to reign alone, and be no longer governed by others," an answer which more than ever inflamed Catherine's indignation and revenge. From that moment his fate was sealed.

The Huguenot leaders now proposed retreat before it should be too late, but the extreme reluctance of the admiral, to rekindle the flame of war, determined him to dare all perils, and remain at Paris. The king's conduct, too, gave reason to suppose that, horror-struck by the outrage upon his "friend," he would be more than ever solicitous to secure the safety of the Protestants. But though it is only just to Charles to state that he was wholly averse from bloodshed in the first instance, the fiendish arguments of his mother triumphed in the end, and a reluctant consent was at length drawn from him, (the result of a false statement relative to a plot of extermination supposed to be laid for himself and relatives by Coligny's party) to the catastrophe about to ensue. This was on Saturday; the tragedy was to commence that same night. All day long they kept up the spirits



of the king, preventing him from reflection and inflaming his passion, now fairly aroused, by pictures of intended ravages from the Huguenots. "By Heaven!" he at length exclaimed, excited to madness; "as the admiral is to be sacrificed, I am resolved that not a single Huguenot shall be left in France to reproach me with his death."

As the terrible moment approached, however, Charles's resolution wavered; the frightful counsels of his mother had not extinguished every spark of youthful sympathy; honour and humanity alike asserted their presence: they would be heard, and a fearful conflict distracted his frame, agonized by visions of a slaughtered people, and doubts of an enterprise, for whose development succeeding ages would justly brand his memory with opprobrium. Still "into his ear the poisonous essence was distilled" of his Italian mother's baneful persuasion; and at midnight, when she entered his chamber, and perceived the agitation of her unfortunate son, she employed a merciless sneer, to spur and irritate still further his already maddened spirit. "Look!" she exclaimed, pointing to the drops which hung upon the pale forehead of Charles, "behold these evidences of manly, kingly, determination!—do *you* dare to undertake the government of others—*you*, who are so little capable of governing yourself?" Less tender even



than the savage partner of Macbeth, who would not murder one who "resembled her father in his sleep." Catherine had no compunction for the sufferings of her own flesh and blood ; and, jaded into delirium, Charles gave the order (the period of which, lest he should once more relent, they anticipated by an hour) for the carnage to commence.

It appears, from details of this frightful transaction, that the Huguenots were congregated together, by Catherine's order, into a circumscribed space closely guarded, to insure less obstacle in putting them to death. Every papist was enjoined to wear badges, consisting of a white cross on his cap, and a similar band around the right arm, and at the sound of the tocsin from the Palace of Justice, a simultaneous *émeute* was to begin. But Catherine, impatient of delay, would not await this signal, but sent to the neighbouring church of St. Germain de l'Auxerrois, and speedily the great bell pealed out a toll, which penetrated, like his own knell, the heart of the miserable Charles. The Louvre became suddenly illuminated : torches blazed in the hitherto deserted streets, pistol-shots were heard, and the king, starting up in a frenzy of horror, commanded—too late, alas ! that the sword of destruction should be stayed !

Let us draw a veil over the murder of the venerable and pious Coligny, by the very men who had been



given him for guards ;—over the horrors of the young bride, who, with her own hands, received and concealed from further danger a bleeding Huguenot, while another was killed so close to her that it was thought the blow must have dealt death to her also ;—over the terrors of the king of Navarre her husband, finally forced by the fear of death to consent to receive the mass ;—these atrocities but heighten our horror of the character of the relentless Catherine, again successful in reassuring her son, who, with his brother the Duc d'Anjou, accompanied her to a balcony, and witnessed the progress of the massacre. They are, indeed, scenes “ which make the angels weep ;” and by the very contemplation sear the heart, rather than awaken it to those emotions of pity which not even the Fall itself has utterly eradicated from our being. In this respect the behaviour of Charles is strikingly admonitory, whose ferocity became so intense from witnessing the spectacle, that from, as we have seen, an unwilling abettor, he became a coadjutor in the crime. Humanity shudders at so atrocious a catastrophe—let us pass on !

Among the few that escaped was Merlin, the chaplain of Admiral Coligny, who had, upon the latter's murder, when the body was thrown from the window, and the head severed to be presented to the queen (!),



got upon the roof, and, with the smallest possible chance of success, endeavoured with some others to effect his escape. "This good man dropped into a hay-loft, where he remained in safety several days, and where his heavenly Master fed and sustained him in a way which, if not as striking, was yet quite as providential as that in which it pleased the same Master to support another of his eminent servants, when he fled from the face of Jezebel, a woman of similar dispositions with Catherine, and certainly not more wicked than she. Jezebel upheld one system of idolatry, Catherine another, and both were filled with a like hatred to the true worshippers of Jehovah. Elijah was delivered from the one, Merlin from the other. To the hay-loft, where the latter was secreted, a hen was seen by him to come each day, and lay an egg, and with a thankful heart he partook of the support thus given, and was preserved from starvation."\*

"The eyes of all wait upon thee, O Lord, and thou givest them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather, and when thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good."

Scarcely any, however, were saved from the hands of the Papists, and in the provinces the same scenes were enacted, with few exceptions. News of the

\* "Blots upon the Escutcheon of Rome." Edited by Miss Christmas.



assassinations was sent to the various courts of Europe. At Rome, the tidings were received with ecstasy ; in England, Queen Elizabeth testified her horror and disgust, by hanging the apartments with black, and wearing the deepest mourning. The king of Navarre, meanwhile (who withdrew his compulsory recantation, as soon as he was again a free agent), and the prince de Condé, were with difficulty exempted from the massacre ; the latter, at this period, though not always, persisted in his refusal, when Charles, with frantic vehemence, exclaimed, " Death ! Mass ! or the Bastille !" though the young king, less courageous, less faithful,—temporized, and for the moment consented. The example of the capital was nevertheless not universally followed. The Viscount d'Ortez, when communicated with, by the king, returned for answer, " Sire, I have received your letter, enjoining the inhabitants of Bayonne to a massacre of the Huguenots. Your majesty has in this city many faithful servants, but not one executioner." A reply worthy of immortality.

The evasive conduct of Charles proved that his sense of the enormity of the transaction was not wholly perverted : he, in the first instance, threw the odium upon the Duc de Guise, but finally acknowledged his own culpability and weakness. The Huguenot cause was deemed extinguished by Catherine, but it arose with renewed vigour in every province in France ;



Rochelle, the stronghold of the Reformation, shut its gates against the Royalists, and sustained an obstinate siege. Charles, when urged to exert his wrath against the besieged, and revenge the loss of many of his best men, replied suddenly to his mother, "Madam, who but you are the cause of what has happened? By heaven, you are the occasion of all!" These recriminations were of constant recurrence, and must have still more contributed to transfer the affection of Catherine from her son—never a favourite—to his brother the Duc d'Anjou. The unfortunate and criminal Charles never recovered the impression made by the fearful vigils of St. Bartholomew, but sinking into a profound melancholy, expired little more than a year after. It is worthy of remembrance, that as, during the day of horrible struggle preceding the massacre, his only companion had been a Huguenot gentleman (whom he endeavoured but ineffectually to save), so in his sickness he was attended solely by two persons of the same faith—his physician Paré and his nurse. They were the only ones in whom he could confide of all the numerous sycophants and dependants around! "Ah! my friend," he said to the latter, a short time before his death, "I have followed wrong counsels; God forgive me! What will be the consequence of all? What shall I do? I feel I am lost!" Still more pointedly did he allude to the authoress of all his



remorse, in almost the moment of death. Summoning to his side the king of Navarre, from whom Catherine had tried, but in vain, to detach Margaret, his wife, and the sister of Charles—"Henry," he said to him, affectionately pressing his hand, "I leave you the care of my wife and my daughter. May heaven preserve you, but confide not in ——;" he was interrupted by the queen-mother. "Do not say that," she interposed. "Madam!" was the response of the dying king, "I ought to say it, for it is the truth." But we anticipate.

While Anjou was laying siege to Rochelle, he was informed of his election to the crown of Poland. On receiving the intelligence, he withdrew his forces, and a peace was concluded. The circumstance gave occasion to Catherine for a fresh display of magnificence in honour of her favourite; but so apparent were her views respecting himself and the succession, that the languid Charles exerted all his energy to command the departure of his brother, and in a manner which alarmed Catherine for her own safety as well as his. The court accompanied the new monarch to the frontier. On parting from him, Catherine testified the greatest distress; at length she spoke her adieu in the significant words,—“Go! my son; you will not long remain there!”—a prediction giving rise to the darkest suspicions, though they might have been dictated by



the present precarious state of the king's health. Let us, in concurrence with the general opinion of competent authorities, exonerate the queen from this one, at least, among the horrors of which she has been deemed culpable. Had there even been other ground for the supposition, the well-known dissimulation and prudence of her character would have negated the declaration at such a moment.

The Duc d'Alençon had been proposed as a suitor to Elizabeth of England, when his brother of Anjou declined the honour of an alliance with a woman old enough to be his mother : this prince, the youngest of her sons, and the most insignificant, was thus offered (says Miss Strickland) to the redoubtable Queen Bess. "Would she (Elizabeth) have my son Alençon ? As for him, he wishes it. He is turned of sixteen, though little of his age ;" (so wrote Catherine de Medici) "I deem she would make less difficulty of it if he were of stately growth, like his brother ; then I might hope somewhat, for he has the understanding, visage, and demeanour of one much older than he is ; and as to his age, there are but three years between him and his brother." The crafty Italian, however, later, succeeded in persuading her beloved d'Anjou to make an attempt to secure an interest in our kingdom, with what success we shall see by consulting the same authority. Having exerted all her diplomatic talents



to bring about a match, her ambassador returned to the court of England. "Elizabeth questioned him very minutely as to the personal qualifications of Henry of Anjou, and received such a favourable description of his fine figure, face, and graceful mien, that, conceiving a great wish to see him, she ordered Leicester to make a discreet arrangement for that purpose with La Mothe Fenelon, without committing her maidenly delicacy. The plan proposed was, for her to direct her progress towards the Kentish coast, and then, if her princely suitor wished to see her, he might cross the Channel *incognito* by a morning tide, and return by the next tide, provided he had no inclination to remain longer to cultivate the opportunity thus condescendingly vouchsafed to him of pleading his own cause. Unfortunately, Monsieur did not feel disposed to become the hero of the *petite romance*, which the royal coquette had taken the trouble of devising, by way of enlivening the solemn dulness of a diplomatic courtship with a spice of reality. She had from first to last declared that nothing on earth should induce her to marry a prince whom she had never seen; and Henry of Anjou, though acknowledged to be one of the handsomest princes in Europe, perversely determined not to gratify her curiosity by exhibiting himself. Perhaps he had been alarmed by the well-meant but injudicious hint conveyed by Monsieur de la Mothe to his royal



mother, that the queen's ladies had received instructions to watch him very diligently, in order to discover whether he evinced any genuine demonstrations of love for their mistress. A formidable ordeal certainly for any man to undergo, who was expected to play the wooer to a spinster of Elizabeth's temper, and who was so many years his senior. Elizabeth, though disappointed of a personal interview of Monsieur, requested to see his portrait, and two were sent for her inspection by the queen-mother."

Neither of the brothers was destined to possess the mature heart of Elizabeth ; and d'Alençon appears to have consoled himself by conspiring with the Protestants, less with a view to benefit them, than a prospective one to his brother's crown. The negotiation was long protracted, from a prediction to Catherine de Medici, that all her sons would be kings ; and up to the year 1582, the attempt to secure the succession of the crown of England to the royal family of France was not wholly abandoned. The two elder brothers having successively reigned, the third, upon the death of Charles, was declared king. The queen-mother, immediately upon the event, sent to the new monarch, and herself hurried to meet him, secure of his permanent concurrence in her actual management of the regency. But Catherine, however fondly greeted by her favourite child, or tenderly



assured of the gratitude he had but too little reason to extend to her, discovered, within a short time, that his mind was debased and paralyzed alike by superstition and profligacy. Foreseeing Henry's ruin, and that of his realm, she was powerless to avert it; distrusted and condemned as well by Papists as by Protestants, her diplomacy was ineffectual to allay violence or heal the bleeding state. Then followed the celebrated *League*, which completed, by the flame it enkindled, the destruction of the weak and dissolute Henry. Catherine, for whom retribution was not in this world, having schemed to the last, and supplied with the force of an extraordinary nature, the counsel and assistance he had ever depended upon, died at this period, having reached the threescore and ten years, allotted to mortality. In the castle of Blois she breathed her last, having, for the sake of her degenerate offspring, engaged him to conciliate her hated son-in-law, the king of Navarre (afterwards Henry IV.) with the other princes of the blood, and to grant "*liberty of conscience for the good of the state*;" a piece of advice which the king found himself speedily necessitated to remember.

It should be the characteristic of an historian to hold the mean between the two extremes of religious prejudice, or political bias. He should place him-



self as far as possible above the excitements which circumstances are calculated to raise, and by which the clear view of events and characters is apt to be distorted. But this duty, difficult at all times, is infinitely impeded by representations transmitted through channels, of themselves doubtful and turbulent, especially when the facts recorded are so abhorrent from our sympathy as to arouse detestation even by their narration. Hence, it is not to be wondered at, that the character of Catherine has been lauded by her partisans on account of its shrewdness and policy, and vituperated by opponents, and, with undoubted justice, for its cruelty and intolerance. It hardly requires the ferocity of massacre to make us revolt from that hypocritical assumption of religion which aggravates, rather than conceals, utter profligacy. Favourably viewed, we may admit the statement given by Daniel, a Romanist and French historian, that "she had a great capacity for government, an unusual talent for the most important affairs, and a fertile mind." But we demur to the term "magnificent," as applied to the latter, since the word appears synonymous with exalted virtue, and that high and pure atmosphere of holy thoughts, which true intellect absorbs, as its native air. Certain is it, that the genius which could devise, and the heart which could perpetrate such scenes of misery and bloodshed, has nothing



left of higher spirits, but the malignant degradation of one,—

“Who appears less than archangel ruined !”

Allowing, therefore, for the misrepresentation of party, and the ignorance which must always exist of the secret springs of action operating in the mind of a by-gone age, we, who utterly repudiate the detestable principle, that “the end sanctifies the means,” can never be deluded into the recognition of Catherine’s character as estimable, or other than admonitory ; nor should the frightful deeds of such an one be more strongly reprehended than now, when the massacre which has stamped her name with indelible infamy, has been recommended to public commendation by the issue of a new medal, struck from the old dies, celebrating the horrible iniquity, with all the important sanction of Papal panegyric !



## The Lady Jane Grey.

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Born 1537—Died 1554.

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IN broad contrast to the age of restricted intellect, which denied to woman not only an excess of mental culture, but even the ordinary means necessary to render her an enlightened companion, arises a period evoking one at once the least pretending and the most cultivated, equally interesting as signally unfortunate, in the annals of female heroism. So nearly approaching perfection, indeed, do various authorities represent Lady Jane Grey to have been, that she seems almost the ideal creature of a romance : that girl, who possessed (as we are told by one of them), "every talent without the least weakness of her sex." Our young ladies of the present day, whose conversance with foreign languages scarcely enables them to ask correctly for mere articles of necessity at a continental hotel, would start at the proficiency of a companion who not only could converse in French and Italian as fluently and elegantly



as in her mother tongue, but who wrote and spoke the Latin and Greek, and was well versed in Hebrew, Arabic, and Chaldee. Nor were these attainments the result of indifference to those feminine tastes, without which no woman can occupy her proper place in the grand scheme of creation. Eminently endowed by nature, her abilities and aptitude for instruction were only equalled by the excessive modesty and sweetness of her disposition. "She had" (says Fuller) "the innocence of childhood, the beauty of youth, the solidity of middle, the gravity of old age, and all at eighteen; the birth of a princess, the learning of a clerk, the life of a saint, and the death of a malefactor for her parents' offences."

The history of these last, and of the "nine days' wonder," the reign of the hapless Queen Jane, is familiar to the youngest student in our country's records. We will therefore discuss such details only, as illustrate her private and doubly interesting story, opposed to that brief interval which rendered her the unwilling actor upon the difficult arena of public life.

Mary, Queen Dowager of France, the favourite sister of Henry VIII., married for her second husband one who had loved her in youth, Charles Brandon, duke of Suffolk. From this princess, her maternal grandmother, the claim descended to that crown, the assumption of which Jane expiated with her life.



Unmindful of the prior right of his two sisters, the young King Edward VI. agreed to the proposals of the duke of Northumberland, whose son had obtained the hand of Jane, and submitted the succession to the opinion of a council completely in that minister's interest. To secure as far as practicable his daughter-in-law's position, the duke further persuaded the king, whose judgment and perceptions were weakened by disease, to execute a will, in which her succession was distinctly stated, though a little reflection would have convinced both the duke and his sovereign how unlikely was so illegal a measure, ever to meet success.

In the month of May, Durham House, the duke of Northumberland's splendid new London residence, witnessed the marriage of Suffolk's two young daughters, Jane and Katharine, within six weeks, and the king, who had been gradually growing worse under the care of a mysterious woman, who undertook his case when abandoned in despair by his physicians, expired while engaged in prayer, leaving a legacy of strife and wretchedness to his unfortunate cousin and heiress. For two days after the event, the tidings of his death were kept concealed, and Jane herself was not made aware of it, while this and every other means were resorted to, to take the Princess Mary's party by surprise, and obtain possession of her person, to be imprisoned, if not still more summarily disposed of.



Lady Jane and her rival were well and intimately known to each other. A few months before her marriage, the former had been a guest of Mary's at Newhall, and it was upon this occasion that an anecdote is recorded of her, which serves at least to prove the decided nature of the diverse opinions the cousins held, together with that soundness and readiness of intelligence remarkably characterizing Jane. The princess had presented her visitor with a gold necklace, set with pearls, together with a very rich dress, which latter, it appears, the giver thought more of than she for whom it was intended. Jane, unfortunately, in allusion to this dress, spoke of the princess as an alien to God's word, before auditors who repeated her remarks with an asperity to which the charitable temper of the utterer was a stranger. Passing through the chapel, where service, according to the Romish ritual was daily performed, but at an hour when none was going forward, Jane observed that her companion, a lady of Mary's household, bowed low before the host, or consecrated wafer, standing in its elaborate receptacle, the *pix*, upon the high altar. This obeisance is one customary amongst professors of that faith, but although Jane must have known it well, she slyly inquired,—

“What do you do that for? is the Princess Mary in the chapel? I do not see her.”



Lady Wharton, her companion, replied,—“No, the princess is not here.”

“Why do you bow so low, then?”

“I bow to Him that made me,” was the answer.

“No, surely; did not the baker make him?” Jane said,—a question which, we find, Lady Wharton recorded, though without her own reply.

The circumstance of this intimacy must have afforded still stronger obstacles to Jane’s mind, when, to her extreme surprise and distress, she was called upon to learn in the same moment the tidings of King Edward’s death, and that upon her reluctant head, every hand that she loved and revered, conspired to place Mary’s rightful crown. We can easily fancy the horror with which she met these proposals—this modest and retiring girl, who was thus described by the great Ascham, tutor to Mary’s sister, afterwards Queen Elizabeth. “Going to make a visit of ceremony to her parents, at their mansion in Leicestershire, he found her in her own apartment reading the *Phædo* of Plato in the original Greek, while her father and mother, with all their household, were hunting in the park. On his expressing his surprise that she should be absent from the party,—

“I wisse,” she replied, “that all their sport in the park is but a shadow to the pleasure that I find in



Plato. Alas ! good folk, they never knew what true pleasure meant."

"And how," rejoined Ascham, "came you, madam, to this deep knowledge of pleasure ; and what did chiefly allure you to it, seeing not many women, but very few men have attained thereto ?"

To this, she replied simply, that "God had blessed her by giving her sharp and severe parents, and a gentle schoolmaster." [This was John Aylmer, then chaplain to Lord Suffolk, her father, but afterwards bishop of London.] "When I am in the presence either of father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or go ; eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure, and number, even unto the perfection of the making of the world, or else I am sharply taunted and cruelly threatened, till the time come that I must go to Mr. Aylmer, who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing whilst I am with him ; and thus my book hath been so much my pleasure, and bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it all other pleasures in very deed be but trifles and very troubles unto me." These joys, so dearly prized, were destined to be evanescent as a mid-day dream. Like some beautiful wild bird caught while carolling its first sweet strains,



and imprisoned in a gilded cage ; luxury, splendour and admiration offered no compensation in exchange for the joyous freedom of her native woods.

Jane, a young bride of scarcely six weeks, was alone, when her father and the duke of Northumberland informed her of the death of her kinsman. A consonance of age, talents, tempers, and studies, had produced a considerable attachment between them, and with tears she learned that the youthful king had at last sunk beneath the fate which had so long threatened him. But great was her dismay when she was told to listen to the contents of a paper, which would show her not only how dearly her playmate and cousin had loved her, but how efficient he considered her to succeed him, in naming her as his heiress and the queen of England ! They then proceeded to read his will, and the letters patent, confirming to her the succession, and falling upon their knees, offered her their homage. She herself tells us in a letter she afterwards sent to Queen Mary, that upon the intelligence, she fainted and fell to the ground, overwhelmed with grief at learning the part she was expected to assume. When her strength was almost exhausted, her mother, an imperious woman, between whom and herself little attachment appears to have subsisted, was called in, and to her arguments, and the solicitations of her young husband,



Lord Guildford Dudley, she at length most unwillingly, and with sad and gloomy foreboding, yielded.

No interval was permitted her for reflection. On the 10th of July, about three o'clock in the afternoon, Jane was conveyed by water to the Tower of London, received there as queen, and the same evening proclaimed throughout the metropolis. The spirit in which she was greeted by the immense concourse of people through which she passed, was not calculated to raise the drooping spirits of the reluctant sovereign. On all sides, cold and silent groups mingled with the partisans of the Dudley faction. Not unfrequently the name of "Mary" was whispered amongst them, and it was remarked that the strangeness of some new spectacle rather than any demonstration of congratulation appeared to have drawn them together. An occasional brawl still further disturbed the forced calmness of the people : one man was set in the pillory and punished by the loss of both his ears, for speaking during the time the proclamation was being read—an exercise of severity which was far from doing the cause of poor Jane any service with those upon whose voice the whole success of the plans for her depended. The council, together with several noblemen, attended her to the Tower, and once there, however reluctantly, Northumberland, whose cause was too precarious to admit of his standing upon ceremony, kept them a



species of prisoners about the person of the young queen.

In the mean time Mary, who had received timely information of the plot against her liberty, took refuge in a precipitate flight. Sawston Hall, near Cambridge, received her, the residence of a zealous Romanist, from which place she moved to Kenninghall, and finally to Framlingham Castle, in Suffolk, the vicinity of which to the sea facilitated her escape in case of defeat : and here flocked to her standard, numbers of adherents with occasional deserters from the rival ranks.

Sadly and unwillingly Jane now began to take upon her the duties of her new rank. She commenced her part of royalty with many tears, thus plainly declaring to all who approached her "that she was forced by her relations and friends to this high but dangerous post." Upon her arrival at the Tower, the Lord Treasurer had brought to her the crown, to see how it would fit her head.

Turning from it with aversion, she made one last attempt to influence the sympathies and prudence of her injudicious partisans.

"Alas! I cannot put it on," she said, feelingly. "I possess no title to it; nay were the princesses Mary and Elizabeth not in existence, there are many others who possess a prior claim to this glittering honour: even my own mother's right comes



before mine : take it hence, then ; I dare not—I cannot put it on.”

She was answered, “ that she need not scruple, and that shortly another crown should grace her husband’s brows—she must consent.”

Still, however, she refused ; and she tells of much ill-treatment, even of violence, endured upon the part of Lord Guildford’s family, if not on his own, in consequence of the expression of her determination. Little did she think, when so earnestly desiring to put away from her the emblem of her royal state, that the very same Lord Treasurer who now so anxiously pressed it upon her, would within a few days assail her upon pretence that several of the jewels were missing, and tell her that, being accountable for them, all the money and effects of herself and her husband would be confiscated and lost to them for ever !

In the midst of an anxiety her mind chafed under, and a pomp it despised, Jane resorted thankfully to those studious habits which had so often soothed her, and were now destined to form her principal support and solace. She read her favourite authors as usual, wrote and conversed upon the subjects most deeply interesting to her inquiring mind, and kept something of a journal, to which she afterwards referred, in writing her well-known letter to the queen. Her time, however, must have been often and distressingly infringed upon.



“Jane Grey, wife of Lord Guildford Dudley,” she naïvely complained, “was more free than Jane Grey, queen of England.”

It is not very astonishing that, surrounded by doubtful friends and strange attendants, the proposition to deprive her of the comfort of her father's presence, by sending him to head the forces, received an agitated denial from the young queen. Northumberland, who entertained just doubts of the fidelity of those about her, urged again and again this duty upon the weak-minded Suffolk, whose principal experience lay in martial affairs. Unfortunately for herself, however, Jane was peremptory in requiring her father's support ; and Northumberland, overruled by the plausible praises of the council, undertook, though with reluctance, this important duty, for which he appears to have been singularly unqualified.

This was the death-blow to Jane's short-lived power : she was now doomed to experience the truth, that

“Thrice is he arm'd who hath his quarrel just.”

However repugnant to the majority of the nation were the fanatical and mistaken tenets of Mary, she was the rightful heiress to the throne of her father and brother ; and though the good Bishop Ridley, in an animated address, eloquently strove to impress upon the people the right and title of the Lady Jane, he



was heard in frigid silence ; indeed, the same evening (Sunday), measures were taken for the whole of the council going over to the opposing party. Next came the terrible intelligence that the duke of Northumberland had been deserted by his troops, and that nobility, gentry, and commons, alike satisfied with a declaration from Mary, were unanimously acknowledging her as queen.

Goodrich, the lord chancellor, declining to act further in Jane's name, delivered the Great Seal to Lords Arundel and Paget ; and they setting off immediately for Framlingham, placed it in the hands of the new sovereign, receiving in return their own free pardon. Suffolk, with downcast face and agitated manner, sought the apartment of his daughter, and told her sadly that she must put off her royal robes, and return to her humble and quiet life !

And how did the Lady Jane receive this intelligence ? Constant to the principles she professed, and nobly indifferent to vicissitude and danger, she told him she willingly resigned honours which, but for her mother and himself, she never had assumed.

" This relinquishment of the cares of royalty," she said, " is the first voluntary act which I have performed since my assumption of them. Grieve not, my father, to see your child return to that condition which God created her to fill ; the crown is of right



my cousin Mary's, let her take it and wear it, who is so much more worthy than I."

At the same hour, when Mary's inconstant subjects were presenting to her the Great Seal of the kingdom, the Lady Jane was on her way, comparatively unattended, back to that mansion from which the illusory vision of royalty had lured her hapless steps. Alas! no sanctuary might its walls now afford her. Within a few days, the duke of Northumberland, having unsuccessfully descended to several mean attempts at temporizing to save his life, was arraigned with his eldest son, and sentenced to die; while the younger, Lord Guildford, and his bride, were arrested and brought again to the Tower, where the short pageant of power had been enacted. On the scaffold the duke addressed the crowd, and professed himself willing to die, "having deserved a thousand deaths." His firmness seems at this time to have been restored, nor were the unfortunate noblemen who shared his fate, less remarkable for the calmness with which they met death.

During this time of bloodshed and flight, Lady Jane and her husband, imprisoned within the gloomy walls of the Tower, meditated, in fearful suspense, upon the fate that their cruel relative the queen, had doubtless prepared for them. The mother of Jane had successfully interceded for her husband; but her child appears to have been calmly surrendered to her fate,



although her own ambition had principally dictated the marriage and its lamentable results. Lady Jane had, notwithstanding, the liberty of the Tower, and was not kept a close prisoner, being allowed several indulgences scarcely ever granted to state prisoners under such circumstances.

It is the opinion of several writers that Mary desired to spare the life of her unwilling rival, had not her father, the duke of Suffolk, been a second time the instrument of her misfortune. A rebellion was set on foot by this wretched man, and, in the triumph of a successful commencement to the enterprise of Sir Thomas Wyatt and himself, her name was again proclaimed as queen in every city they passed through. Gardiner now urged upon Mary the necessity of putting the sentence into effect upon the unfortunate Jane and her husband, as a discouragement to the insurrectionists ; and for this he justly incurred great odium, afterwards, the youth and interest of both pleading for sympathy, with every English heart.

At Temple Bar, upon the very scene of the contest which resulted in Wyatt's capture and the dispersion of his adherents, was the death-warrant brought to Queen Mary for her signature. The news was immediately conveyed to the Tower, Feckenham, Mary's favourite chaplain, being the messenger ; an unwilling one, it is hoped, from the sweetness of his man-



ners, though his zeal for his misguided Church was extreme. She received him with the utmost gentleness, as one by whom her doom, however sudden, was expected, if not desired.

According to the custom of the period, he invited her to a controversy upon religious subjects; and imagining from her reply that she desired time before her end, obtained for her a respite of three days. The conversation between them has been preserved, together with her letter to her father containing her farewell. She also addressed a letter in Greek to her sister, Lady Catherine Herbert. She firmly resisted every endeavour to shake her constancy to the reformed Church, and assured Feckenham that his exhortations had caused her more distress than all the horrors of her approaching fate. It is to be noted that Morgan, the judge who had given sentence against her upon her trial, shortly afterwards became insane, and continually cried in his ravings to have the Lady Jane taken away from him, up to the moment of his death.

On the morning of the 12th of February, Lord Guildford Dudley, having in vain solicited an interview with his wife, to which she, fearful of unnerving them both, would not consent, was brought to the scaffold on Tower Hill, and, after a few minutes spent in prayer, quietly met his fate. His death excited so much pity that it was deemed advisable to consummate that of Jane within



the Tower walls. At the time of her husband's execution she was in "Master Partridge's house," where on his way he had passed beneath her window, and received her last gesture of remembrance.

In the south-west angle of the great area, in front of the chapel of St. Peter, there is a small portion of the pavement, distinguished by a somewhat darker appearance of the stones. Formerly, we hear, the space all around was covered with grass, but nothing would grow on *that* spot. Here was placed the scaffold, with all its frightful appendages. Advancing towards it, accompanied by her maids, Elizabeth Tilney and Mistress Helen, who wept bitterly, she encountered the headless corpse of her husband borne to the Chapel.

"Oh! Guildford, Guildford," was her only exclamation; "the ante-past is not so bitter that thou hast tasted, and which I shall soon taste, as to make my flesh tremble; it is nothing compared to the feast of which we shall partake this day in heaven!" and, so saying, she went calmly on towards the scene of her last trial.

Holding a book in her hand, from which she occasionally prayed, she ascended, with a firm step, the scaffold. From the platform she addressed a few words to those around, expressive of her resignation and the justice of her fate. She said she was not to



be blamed for "having offended the queen's majesty : but only for that I consented to the thing which I was enforced unto." She then commended herself to God.

When the executioner would have assisted to disrobe her, she motioned him aside, and turned to her attendants, who, with many sobs, bared her beautiful throat. As they did so, she said—"I pray you, despatch me quickly;" and, kneeling, inquired, "Will you take it off before I lay me down?" "No, madam," was the answer. Then tying the handkerchief over her eyes, and feeling for the block, she said, "Where is it?" One of the bystanders "guided her thereto;" and laying down her head, she resigned meekly, as she had fulfilled, her forfeit existence.

Two records of her, remain in the Tower : the axe with which this crime was perpetrated, and which was the same used to deprive the fair Anne Boleyn of life, and the word "JANE" traced upon the wall of one of the apartments in the Beauchamp Tower, attributed to the hand of her husband.

It is possible that history will never again present a combination of merit and misfortune parallel to that exemplified in Lady Jane Grey ; yet surely it is true that sorrow is the atmosphere in which real excellence best thrives. To mortal short-sightedness, unable to fathom the designs of Omniscent wisdom, it may



seem strange that the weakness of an hour should sometimes incur a more fearful temporal punishment than the crimes of a whole life ; but if the suffering

“ Which patient merit of th’ unworthy takes,”

set forth the honour of the Creator, improve the world, and sublimate the victim’s faith, most certainly will this last bear its reward with it. The ocean is purified by turbulence, the light burns brighter by consumption of itself, and thus the human mind is cleared from evil by the agitation of sorrow, and the martyr’s faith shines most radiantly in the hour of physical dissolution !



## Mary, Queen of Scots.

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Born, 1542—Died, 1587.

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THE name of "Mary Stuart," to judge by the number and ardour of her biographers, as well as by the strange fascination with which it falls upon our own ears, is, and will be, a spell equally potent in all times; but her character has perhaps formed the theme of more controversy, more diversity of opinion—as well in excess of advocacy, as in illiberal reprehension—than that of any other historical personage, ancient or modern. Yet, be her faults extreme, her weakness unpardonable, we must confess it ever difficult to judge impartially the unfortunate; and saying nothing about the halo of feminine loveliness, mental and physical, which to a certain degree constantly obscures the graver outline, even to a critical eye, of the object it encircles, it is almost an impossibility to regard a life of such unprecedented misfortune—years spent in melancholy confinement, and terminated by a violent death—without feeling that



while the character of Elizabeth, were it of spotless pretension otherwise, would be completely marred by the circumstance of her unfortunate kinswoman's execution, that of Mary is elevated by the injustice which dictated her fate, and the meekness with which it was accepted, into somewhat the dignity of a martyr. Born to wreath her "baby brows" with the circlet of sovereignty, to sustain with the soft and yielding grasp of youth a sceptre which the firmest masculine hand would scarcely have preserved inviolate—nurtured amidst the dangerous fascinations of the French court, never so magnificent, never so insidiously seductive as at her epoch—it would indeed be strange if the womanhood of a youthful widow, unsupported by a mother's precepts, unsustained by a husband's advice or aid, had presented other than a sad picture, where lines of irresolution and frivolity were sometimes deepened by broad and gloomy shadow. We have no opportunity of discussing the question either of actions or their motives; nor inclination to enter the lists, and swell the ranks of champions or assailants. All that is here necessary is a brief record of this queen's eventful life; and, though the mind of youth requires to be made up by others, it will be perhaps well in the present instance, for judgment to be postponed, until conflicting authorities are consulted, and opposing works perused,



relative to one who must, we opine, ever remain what Dargaud, her French biographer, has proclaimed her, "the most problematical of all historic personages, the eternal enigma of history."

Equally inauspicious as the existence which was to follow, Mary's birth occurred almost simultaneously with her father's decease. James V. of Scotland was expiring when intelligence was brought that a daughter instead of a son was born to him, and the disappointment he experienced is supposed to have accelerated his demise. Dreary was the month (December)—still more dreary the expression of those who, long anxiously expectant of an heir, now gazed with ill-repressed disgust at the baby features of the little princess. Mary of Lorraine, her mother, even in the first excess of joy at holding her infant in her arms, was filled with dread and anxiety as to the undisputed possession of the princess's person: and her difficulty was augmented when it appeared the latter had already arrived at supreme rank by the king's death, and the highest in the land flocked to declare homage, and swear allegiance to their cradled queen. Very early in Mary's infant life her tiny hand was pledged to her cousin, Prince Edward of England, the only son of Henry VIII. That arbitrary monarch spared no endeavours to get her, upon this pretext, into his power; and when he found that the



widowed queen of James was resolute in retaining her daughter under her own care, he threw off the mask, and commenced hostilities against her realm : never afterwards failing to mark his ill-feeling, and leaving tangible proof of it in the disposition of the English succession, which, missing Mary, the descendant of his elder sister, was to descend to the younger, in case his own direct heirs failed to survive.

When Mary was between five and six years old, she was reluctantly parted with by her mother, who, dreading her insecurity, formed for the child a treaty of marriage amongst her own relatives ; and in betrothing her to the dauphin of France, entrusted that court also with her safe custody and education up to the period of her marriage. Hitherto the young queen, secluded first in the castle of Stirling, and afterwards in the priory of Inchmahome, a little island in the lake of Menteith, had progressed as far as her tender years would admit in such studies as Mary of Lorraine's excellent sense directed ; these had been shared by four young ladies taken from the first Scottish families, and called the "queen's Maries:" from the circumstance of all bearing that name.

" Last night the queen had four Maries,  
To-night she'll ha'e but three ;  
There was Mary Seyton and Mary Beaton  
And Mary Livingstone and me !"—

says the old ballad ; "*Me*" being Mary Fleming, the



grandchild of James IV., and daughter of Lady Fleming, governess to the youthful sovereign. Accompanied by her miniature *dames d'honneur*, these four Maries, the destined dauphiness set sail from Dumbarton, and arrived safely in France, having escaped the English vessels sent to intercept her, and weathered the tempestuous strife of wind and wave, which attended her voyage. In the hunting-palace of St. Germain, the young affianced pair were educated together; Mary Stuart's uncle, the cardinal of Lorraine, superintended her studies; Pasquier instructed her in history, and George Buchanan in Latin: while the poet Ronsard laid the foundation for a taste which accompanied her in union with the strong sense of gratitude, with which she regarded him up to the last hours of her life. Mary soon learned to dance,—“in the Spanish minuet she was equalled only by her aunt, the beautiful Anne of Este, while no lady of the court could eclipse her in the galliarde;” she also rode, even in childhood, with fearless grace; and as for music, this was an accomplishment in which nature formed her to excel, possessed as she was of an intuitive and hereditary taste for it, one which was seconded by the somewhat excessive care expended in developing her talents to proficiency. Catharine de Medeci, the mother of Mary's destined husband, and one of her enemies in after-life, though never from



the first experiencing an attraction towards the child, could not refuse the tribute of praise to her daughter-in-law's appearance and attainments. In a letter to Mary of Lorraine, she says, that "for a child of her tender years there was nothing about her she could wish altered;" the letters of her uncles, the Guises, to their sister of Scotland, were constantly filled with accounts of her grace, beauty, and intelligence; and Mary returned the partiality with all her warm little heart, declaring that their care of her "was incredible:" nor could they do for her more, "if she were their own child." These years were the only happy ones in Mary's calamitous career, and in after-life she unceasingly recurred to them, preserving an attachment to the land of her adoption, far exceeding any she entertained for that of her birth. In 1550, Mary of Lorraine came over to visit her daughter; and after remaining with her some time, returned to Scotland, where she attained the title of Queen Regent. So delighted was she with Mary's improvement, that she shed tears of joy. This proved the last occasion upon which the mother and child were destined to meet; before Mary returned to her kingdom, the beautiful queen-mother had ceased to breathe.

Early in the year 1558, the long-projected marriage with the dauphin, afterwards Francis II., took place, and was solemnized with the utmost imaginable pomp.



Francis, sickly and feeble from his birth, formed a far less interesting object to public curiosity than did the beautiful Mary, who at this period united an almost perfect *contour* of feature and form, with an intelligence unrivalled in a girl of sixteen. Very graceful in stature, the finish, if it may be so termed, of Mary's figure was even more remarkable than its general expression of beauty. Her forehead and temples were formed, as well as her small delicate ears, in exact symmetry ; her throat was slender and graceful, as was her rounded waist ; and her hands were the smallest and most beautifully shaped in the world. Her complexion inclined to the brunette, the colour of her hair and eyebrows being dark. Mary was a favourite with her husband's father ; and when he was accidentally killed in the tournament of 1559, it is probable her grief counterbalanced the increase of importance she experienced in knowing herself queen-consort of France, as well as in her own right, sovereign of Scotland. But, as if two crowns were not care enough, the king had irrevocably injured his daughter-in-law, by arrogating for her the right to another, the present possessor of which was not one, to see it tamely disposed of, even as a matter of succession. Mary of England had died in the same year that witnessed the dauphin's nuptials ; and when Elizabeth succeeded, her declaration of Protestantism formed an



insuperable objection to the recognition of the Roman Catholic courts of Europe. That of France nourished far too selfish views to need an even less plausible pretext for denying the new queen's rights ; and Henry hesitated not a moment to institute, through his son's bride, a claim, favoured by the declaration of Elizabeth's own father, Henry VIII., as to her illegitimacy. This assumption, the entire act of the king of France, may have met with opposition from Mary : she might have refused her sanction to a claim she must have felt was unjust ; like Lady Jane Grey, it is possible she had strength of mind to refuse the offered crown in the first instance, though not resolution enough to resist the united entreaties and commands of her relatives. In an evil hour the young pair suffered themselves to be proclaimed at a tournament, not only king and queen of Scotland, in addition to the titles of dauphin and dauphiness of France, but declaring Mary, "*Reine d'Angleterre*" — an announcement responded to by shouts of acclamation by the adulating Parisians. Terribly did Elizabeth avenge this insult in after years, but at the time it was policy to temporise on both sides, and no open rupture resulted from the ill-advised measure.

The coronation of Francis and Mary took place at Rheims in the following September ; but the young



king, who had rallied upon his accession, relapsed into a state of still deeper melancholy until the end of the year 1560, when he died, earnestly commending his widow to the care of his family. Francis was the younger of the two ; he had few attractions to the eye of a spirited and vivacious girl : yet Mary appears to have felt great grief at the loss of the companion and playmate of her youth, with whom, it would seem, she had promised herself many years of still more complete happiness than the two they had passed together. Her influence with him had been paramount ; and for this reason the queen-mother (never her sincere friend) had conceived a dislike to her which had now full opportunity of exemplifying itself. Catharine, who has been accused of poisoning a son who openly declared his intention of governing without her assistance, was not only anxious to provide a more facile pupil ; but very jealous of the affection Francis entertained for his queen, and as soon as life was extinct, she hastened with unseemly eagerness to make arrangements for a second regency, the powers of which were likely to be far less nominal than the first, since the new king, Charles IX., was a boy of but ten years old, and completely under her control. Careful upon all occasions to yield precedence to the queen-mother, Mary too plainly perceived she was now less than ever a favourite



with one who was yet too politic to quarrel with the darling of the French. Mary occupied a most uncomfortable position ; nor is it strange, even if the voice of duty were silent, that she who had been accustomed to hold the first eminence in the realm, formed at length the resolution of retiring from a court where she had become of minor importance—the scene of all her associations, the object of her love and admiration—to the bleak land and the primitive subjects over which she could at all events assume undisputed sway. This determination, sadly and reluctantly conceived, she tardily carried into execution. Her voyage was at length arranged, and everything in readiness, and being refused a safe convoy through the English fleet, which, as a matter of courtesy, she had demanded of Queen Elizabeth, Mary embarked, determined to brave all risks, on the fifteenth of August, from Calais. Mournful and inauspicious in its every augury, the grief of Mary at parting with her beloved France to undertake this melancholy voyage, has been recorded by many writers. Bathed in tears, the fair young widow, prostrate on her couch, watched from the deck the receding shores of a country she was destined never to revisit. Despair seemed to take possession of her heart, and it was a relief to the four Maries, who never yet separated from their royal mistress, beheld her agonies with tender distress, when they perceived



her, silent and abandoned, gradually weeping herself to sleep. Favoured by a thick fog, the vessel which bore her escaped those of the queen of England, who had given instructions to intercept her ; but one of the little fleet was captured, though liberated again on finding that it contained the earl of Eglinton instead of the Scottish sovereign. After an absence of thirteen years, her foot again pressed the shores of her birth.

Mary's refusal to sign the treaty of Edinburgh, which would have for ever barred her claim to a throne deemed by the Papists her actual right, provoked her rival Elizabeth to the utmost, who found insinuation or threat equally unavailing. Stealthily watched by the Reformers, every action was communicated to the English court ; but unused to deception, and heedless of policy, Mary conducted herself as though surrounded only by friends.

She introduced masques and dancing into Holyrood, instituted a species of refinement never before exemplified in the court manners, and assisted by a retinue of the most accomplished French nobility, spent much of her time in endeavouring to soften and polish manners which appeared to her little less than barbarous. But another innovation met with a more decided opposition than had hitherto been deemed politic by the reproving eyes



around. Knox and his companions had borne with sullen gloom the "fiddling and uncomely skipping" of the queen and her ladies ; but when they followed it up by attending mass in the chapel of the palace, the grave accusation against her by those who would not permit their queen the liberty of conscience they themselves claimed, set sparks to the smouldering discontent, and flamed up into murmurs which Mary's uniform courtesy, dignity, and gentleness, had scarcely power to repress.

Suitors from every imaginable quarter poured in their applications for the hand of the young widow of Francis II. Don Carlos of Spain, the Archduke Charles of Austria, and the Prince de Condé, with many other foreign princes, were ambitious of this honour ; while the devotion of the earl of Arran at home vied with that of Sir John Gordon (perhaps the most disinterested of all her lovers), but equally without success. Mary at this period was averse from marriage. Queen Elizabeth, on her part, proposed her favourite, Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester ; though she was by no means sincere in desiring such a match ever to take place. Mary's pride at first revolted from marrying a subject ; but after an interval of anxiety and annoyance, urged by her nobles to ally herself with some one of her numerous admirers, and not less prompted by the inclination of her own heart, at the time fairly



enslaved, she fixed her choice upon her cousin and Elizabeth's, Henry Stuart, Lord Darnley, and sealed her fate by as ill-assorted and lamentable a match as could well have been planned under her peculiar circumstances.

Possessed of great external promise, tall, handsome, accomplished, and "well instructed in all comely exercises," it is yet strange that Mary's fancy should have been so struck by a youth some years her junior, and peculiarly headstrong, while he was conceited and boyish in demeanour. She had been now a widow between four and five years, and was greatly improved in every way ; but especially in tact, and the diplomatic policy demanded by her station. In her twenty-third year, the husband she chose was only nineteen ; but young as he was, he was still old and crafty enough to conceal all the less amiable portions of his character by assuming, in the presence of the queen, tastes whose refinement he was far from comprehending. Mary had worn the weeds of a widow ever since the death of Francis ; but she threw them off on the 29th of July, 1565, and gave her hand to Darnley in the chapel royal of Holyrood, in the presence of the *élite* of the Scottish court. It appears from the researches of Prince Labanoff, that some months before this public solemnization of their nuptials, Darnley and his royal "ladye-love" had been secretly married at Stirling



Castle, the queen's secretary, David Rizzio, to whose instrumentality the bridegroom was largely indebted for his progress in her favour, having converted his apartment into a Romish chapel for the occasion.

The dream of happiness in which Mary had indulged was soon rudely as suddenly dissipated. Every honour, every dignity that she could lavish upon the object of her love, had been at the disposal of the new king—a term it had been a stipulation should be accorded to him: he repaid the tenderness of his bride by the grossest ingratitude and selfishness. Vain and arrogant, his brain was turned by his elevation, which he attributed solely to his extraordinary merits. One moment ambitious to a pitch of absurd frenzy, the next saw him sunk in the most contemptible vices of a weak and unprincipled man. Nor was it strange that Rizzio, who had hitherto assisted him to the best of his power, soon counselled the queen,—who consulted her secretary upon most matters,—to resist his entreaties for a share in the actual powers of the sovereignty; by which conduct he soon incurred the ungrateful Darnley's displeasure. This annoyance grew in the ill-regulated mind of the queen's husband into malignant hatred. Plots were set on foot; assassinations concerted; the father of Darnley, the earl of Lennox, Morton, the lord chancellor, Lindsay, and Ruthven,—who had recently risen from a bed of



sickness, which should have taught him better deeds, —held various treasonable meetings, and in the end, the unfortunate Italian was murdered in the very presence of the queen. As Mary was sitting at supper in her closet with the countess of Argyle, and some other ladies, Ruthven, pale, and clothed in armour, appeared at the door of a private passage, usually concealed by the tapestry of the apartment. Rizzio was standing near his royal mistress, but all her entreaties were powerless to save him from the dastardly hands of the wretches, who, unmindful of the presence of a woman and a queen, stabbed him over her shoulder ; then dragging his despairing grasp from the folds of her robe, locked the queen within her chamber, where she was compelled to hear, growing gradually fainter and fainter, as they struggled with him on the staircase outside, his dying groans !

This frightful deed was long and deeply felt by the queen, shocked to the last degree by the perpetration of such an outrage ; she never forgot the emotions it had excited, nor forgave Darnley the share he had in the tragedy. It is not to be supposed that Mary, daily more convinced of the worthlessness of her husband, and the dissimilarity between them, could preserve the affection she had originally entertained for him. She tried, notwithstanding, to reclaim him from his evil associates ; and used such arguments



that Darnley, horror-struck at the insult he had offered her, displayed signs of contrition, and fled with her to Dunbar, accompanied by only three attendants. His promises of reformation were, however, worthless ; his excesses were now of common occurrence, and the lingering remains of affection animating his consort died out, followed by every particle of attachment or interest he had at any time commanded from the nobles and people of Scotland.

It was at a period when Mary, disappointed in the real character of the man she had believed perfection, endeavoured to drown the natural aspirations of her woman's heart in insensibility and *insouciance*, that a dangerous confidant appeared, upon whom she foolishly lavished her lamentations over her forlorn and delicate situation, and thus permitted him an ascendancy over her mind, he was not slow to turn to his own advantage. The turbulent and ambitious Bothwell had been married in the February of 1566, to the sister of the earl of Huntley, Lady Jane Gordon, under the queen's especial sanction and supervision. Bothwell was little calculated by nature,—as little as David Rizzio, who, to quote Miss Strickland's words, was so ugly, "that the defects of his person were such as defy scandal itself to insinuate she preferred him to her husband,"—to attract the attention of a lady who estimated beauty as highly as did Mary



Stuart. He was awkward and ill favoured, and had lost an eye. The secret of the paramount ascendancy of this man over the mind of the queen will never perhaps be wholly cleared up, nor will it be known how far her connexion with his subsequent crimes, renders her the object of blame or pity.

While those around her were agitating various schemes more or less dangerous to herself and her future offspring, Mary was secluded amongst her ladies at Edinburgh Castle, where she had remained ever since her return from Dunbar. The birth of her son, about the middle of June, 1566, diverted for a period the depression of spirits she had for some time fallen into, and induced a temporary reconciliation between herself and Darnley. But the extinct attachment was not to be reanimated, and after a series of entreaties on the queen's part, who once absolutely condescended to stand outside the gate, her perverse husband would not enter—endeavouring to coax him into compliance—Darnley declared his intention of leaving her and their child, and of departing to France. In the midst of the rejoicings, consequent upon the christening of the prince, the heart of the poor young mother was torn by distress and foreboding; tears often escaped her beautiful eyes, and she was frequently heard to desire death to avoid the shame and neglect she



endured from her husband. Bothwell urged a divorce, but to this the queen would by no means consent ; Darnley was expostulated with, but ineffectually ; and he set out to seek his father, whose ill counsels had been principally the cause of the unhappiness existing between the ill-assorted pair. On Darnley's journey, however, he was suddenly seized with a dangerous illness ; the small-pox had been raging in England (one of those attacked by it being Queen Elizabeth herself), and the determinations of the king-consort of Scotland were cut short by the approach of the same malady. At Glasgow the invalid remained, racked by pain, and doubtless in the silence of a sick chamber, revolving his own conduct, and forming plans for amendment when recovered. On first learning the illness of her husband, Mary felt few emotions of pity ; but it would appear that, after a considerable period, and when, though still weak and feverish, Darnley was no longer in danger, the queen relented and decided upon going to him ; and returning with him to the neighbourhood of Edinburgh, where she said she could herself nurse him, and provide with greater facility, the necessary medical aid. To his own destruction, Darnley, wrought upon by her persuasions, consented to this fatal step ; he was removed in a litter to a house situated, it is true, in a lonely position, but, from its eminence commanding the purest



air, in the vicinity of the capital. Here Mary attended him with the most untiring assiduity ; sending occasionally for her band of musicians to divert him, and displaying so much tenderness, that the feeble and now less wayward young man, removed from his evil advisers, learned to regard her with a gratitude which might have laid the foundation for a life of future contentment.

No longer distrustful, Darnley abandoned himself to the happiness of being tended and consoled by one whose powers as a nurse had proved, in the case of her first husband, Francis, so delightful and so indefatigable. But little did he guess the untimely and horrible catastrophe which was to arrest all his hopes. On Sunday evening, the 9th of February, 1567, the queen, one of whose grand predilections was, as we have seen, for masques, left her patient, after remaining with him for some hours, to be present at one given in honour of the marriage of her maid of honour, Margaret Carwood. At two the next morning the revellers were alarmed by the sound of an explosion ; the people were seen running frantically towards the place whence the noise proceeded ; and on reaching the Kirk-of-Field, where Darnley was lodged, it was discovered that the house had been blown up by gunpowder : and his body and that of his servant were found lying in the adjacent garden, though without



either the evidence of violence or the touch of fire apparent upon them.

To pronounce Mary cognizant of the plot, to destroy her miserable husband, would be to deprive her of all further interest or sympathy during the remainder of her troubled life ; presumptive evidence was indeed strong against her, and perhaps no circumstances could have been so favourable to the appearance of complicity as those in which, from the previous dissensions between herself and her husband, she was now placed. But presumptive evidence, nay even circumstantial, has been often, and will be oftener, advanced to convict many an innocent person, and there is no reason from the character of Mary, always facile and compassionate — never revengeful—to suppose she was guilty of this great crime. Of Bothwell's culpability less doubt existed as well from his conduct before, as after, the event. Surrounded by false advisers, horror-struck at the event, and, as in all such cases, doubtless the least credibly informed of the actual facts of the case, Mary yet brought Bothwell to trial on a charge of the murder, and could not be censured if the laxity of his accusers, or the formidable nature of the array he brought to corroborate his denial, prevented justice from taking further course. If Mary committed an error in not following up the conviction of the mur-



derer, she was bitterly punished by her subsequent connection with Bothwell. Betrayed into a marriage with him, her life, which with Darnley had been a burden, became now unbearable ; she passed but a month in his society, after (his wife being divorced by the unexampled assistance of the nobles devoted to his interest) he forced her, by first seizing her person and then imprisoning her, to accord him the rank he coveted, by a guilty and fatal union.

Little indeed did it profit the relentless and ambitious traitor. From the hour of its solemnization, he had surrounded her with guards, who watched every movement and change of countenance ; he had treated her with the greatest indignity, and so broken down her brave spirit, that once after a paroxysm of those "salt tears he caused her daily to shed in abundance," she attempted to escape her hated bonds by threatening her own life, and the moment a fair opportunity offered, she threw herself into the hands of a numerous army of her subjects raised to oppose the Earl's pretensions, and, partly by entreaty, partly by authority, forced Bothwell to a final farewell.

When Mary Stuart surrendered to Kirkaldy of Grange, she was received by the confederate armies with apparent respect, and lavish professions were made to her of loyal allegiance ; but upon her arrival at Edinburgh the unfortunate queen, so far



from meeting with welcome, was received with insult and vituperation, rendered more frightful by the knowledge that they were not wholly undeserved. Mary almost fainted with horror when a banner, depicting the body of her murdered consort, was brutally paraded before her eyes ; her melancholy appearance, covered with dust, travel-stained and bathed in tears, proved however too harrowing ; and popular commiseration being excited, it was deemed expedient, by her deceitful custodians, to place her in the strong and almost inaccessible castle of Lochleven, whither they dragged her, and subjected her to a close confinement.

Her confiding affection never betrayed her into more terrible agonies than she endured upon finding her brother Moray, whom no favours could bind, nor devotion soften, false, and only anxious for her ruin. In her melancholy prison at Lochleven, Lindsay and Me'vil visited the royal captive, with the tidings that her crown was lost, her life in danger, and that the only resource left her was to sign an abdication, hinting at the same time, by way of inducement, that any deed executed in captivity and under protest, would be hereafter invalid. Fearful, yet constant, she was, says Mignet, "wavering between submission and resistance when Lindsay entered with the three acts of the



Secret Council. He placed them silently before the queen, and presented them for her signature. Mary Stuart, as if terrified by his presence, took the pen without uttering a single word, and, with eyes filled with tears, and a trembling hand, put her name to the papers. Lindsay then compelled Thomas Sinclair to affix the privy seal beside the royal signature, notwithstanding his protest that, as the queen was in ward, her resignation was ineffectual."

For nearly the space of a year Mary dragged on an anxious imprisonment, the evils of which were aggravated by the nature of the person to whom she was intrusted, Lady Margaret Douglas, the Lady of Lochleven, whose harsh temper was further acerbated by personal reasons, springing from an involved claim to the crown. Yet even in the isolated island fortress the beauty and address of the Scottish queen raised friends to her cause. The son of Lady Margaret, assisted by another youth, planned and almost executed her escape; in the garb of a laundress she had already reached the boat which was to bear her across the loch, when all was discovered by the whiteness of her hand, which in momentary forgetfulness she exposed to observation. A second and more successful effort was made at midnight, on the 3rd of May, 1568. The keys were purloined by George Douglas, while the family



were at supper, and having given exit to the queen and her attendant lady, the brave lad, closing the gates, threw the keys into the water. On reaching the shore, whither a skiff in waiting for the purpose speedily bore her, Mary was greeted by several of her still loyal nobles ; and mounting a fleet steed, rode to meet other partizans who, joining her, attracted speedily to the royal cause a considerable force.

Her escort intended to convey the queen to Dumbarton Castle, a place of great strength in the possession of her firm friend, Lord Fleming. On her way Mary, flushed with renewed hope, was misguided enough to yield to the desire of those around, and engage with the army of Moray, a force more than double her own. The result might be expected : total defeat ensued, while Mary, from a neighbouring eminence, watched the battle, upon the issue of which her last hopes were suspended. On observing the rout of her adherents she fled many miles to the abbey of Dundrennan, and here remained concealed, while the Regent, who had no suspicion whither she had turned her steps, marched backed to Glasgow to return thanksgiving for what was almost a bloodless victory.

At this juncture Mary Stuart, hunted and harassed, formed the fatal resolution of throwing herself upon the generosity and protection of her near kinswoman, Elizabeth of England. No cordiality had ever sub-



isted between the two queens, though each had been prodigal of compliment, and Elizabeth had even accepted the office of sponsor to the young son of her cousin ; but the fugitive princess, whose own heart formed the criterion by which she judged of others, hesitated not to place implicit trust in one whom, she reasoned, could not be base enough, to betray a desolate and friendless sister. Little did Mary know the character of the woman upon whose compassion she leaned ; very differently would she have estimated the forbearance and honour of her quondam rival if it had ever been her lot to know her personally. In an evil hour, and despite the entreaties of the Lords Herries and Fleming, whose minds foreboded treachery, she crossed the English border, and arrived at Workington, in Cumberland with a retinue of only twenty persons.

From the time of her arrival in England, the history of the royal fugitive presents a series of suffering, which it is impossible to contemplate without harrowing pain. Meanness, hypocrisy, and treachery, mark the side of Elizabeth ; patience and resignation that of Mary. No sooner was she in the power of her rival, than she was enjoined to confirm the enforced abdication of Lochleven, as the price of remaining in peaceable retirement, in the English dominions. She had been “ perfidiously arrested, remorselessly defamed, and



iniquitously imprisoned," but she firmly refused to be the minister of her own destruction. She felt the full meaning of the act she was urged to perform, and its influence upon her fair fame in that and future generations. "The eyes of the whole of Europe are upon me," she said, boldly; "and were I now to yield to my adversaries, I should be pronouncing my own condemnation. A thousand times rather would I submit to death than inflict this stain upon my honour. The last words I speak shall be those of the queen of Scotland."

As Mary refused liberty on such terms, her captivity promised to be permanent. From one prison to another she was conducted; and lest her talents and fascination should induce those around to assist her, she was gradually deprived not only of the comforts of liberty, but of those of society also. After a time, even the consolation of distributing alms, which had formed one of her principal pleasures, was forbidden her, and the fortress in which she was confined converted into a common prison. To complain to Elizabeth of these indignities was ineffectual, remonstrance and supplication were alike disregarded. Mary's friends were negligent, and even the attachment of her own son was undermined by insinuations, when he grew old enough to understand them, against his unfortunate mother, which completely precluded his sympathy for her



wrongs. This ingratitude was the last bitter drop which made her full cup of misery to overflow !

Two circumstances connected with the close of Mary's career constitute the strongest evidence of her general innocence ; we allude to her deportment under protracted imprisonment, and unjust execution, and to the infamous iniquity employed to prove her guilty. The conduct of innocence is characterized by a remarkable abstinence from extravagant exculpation, or from obdurate indifference. Its element is simple truth, and, as if aware that no other support is needed in its hour of trial than the firm column of the upright conscience, it exhibits calmness throughout all, undisturbed by the vacillations of guilt or passion. This deportment maintained through nearly sixteen years of painful imprisonment, corroborates the verdict given by many writers in Mary's favour. On the other hand, the well-known characters and jealous selfishness of Elizabeth, and the means historically ascertained to have been employed by her to involve her victim in the appearance of crime, are cogent proofs to the same effect of Mary's freedom from it.

When justice fails, and truth is powerless to attach certain evidences of crime, and subornation and falsehood are needed for inculpation, common sense may fairly proclaim immunity from the charge. It is incontestably on record, that Mary's officers were



bribed by Elizabeth to assassinate her ; that every pernicious contrivance of crafty cruelty was employed to involve her in Norfolk's plot ; and that at last her death was insured by the enactment,—intolerable in these days of justice and freedom,—which declared all persons guilty of treason for whom *others* might conspire, even though the one had never had a moment's communication with the other ! Under this abominable law, Mary was accused of participation in a plot called that of Babington, in 1586, and as tyranny *in* the sovereign, invariably induces servility in the people, there were absolutely found forty-five judges to pronounce her, guilty !

Mary was first incarcerated in the year 1568, being then but twenty-six years old, and in the bloom of womanly loveliness : when on the morning of the 11th of October, 1586, the commissioners from Elizabeth arrived at the castle of Fotheringay, her present prison, they were received by a very different personage. Misery and confinement, “hope deferred, which maketh the heart sick,” the constant foreboding of unseen malevolence dealing unscrupulously towards her, the repeated sorrow resulting from the successive failures and consequent destruction of those who desired her welfare ;—these needed not the additional ills of unwholesome and scanty provision and accommodation which Elizabeth's meanness dic-



tated, to bow down the noble carriage, and pale the lustrous beauty of the once admired queen. It is true that upon her trial, unassisted by friend or counsellor, she recalled the dignity of the sovereign, and electrified the venal judges by the firm majesty which surrounded her innocence. "I came," were her words, "into the kingdom, an independent sovereign, to implore the queen's assistance ; not to subject myself to her authority. Neither is my spirit so broken by past misfortunes, nor intimidated by present dangers, as to stoop to anything unbecoming the majesty of a crowned head, or that will disgrace the ancestors from whom I am descended, or the son to whom I shall leave my throne. If I must be tried, princes only can be my peers. However noble may be their birth, the subjects of the queen of England are of a rank inferior to mine. Since my arrival in this kingdom, I have been uniformly confined as a prisoner ; its laws never afforded me any protection : let them not now be perverted in order to take away my life."

This speech which, to any honourable mind, would have appealed for the strongest sympathy, aggravated the rage of Elizabeth, to whom, true scion of the race of Tudor, the bold assertion of independent right, was ever the greatest crime.

Mary was doomed to die ; and although we must condense this most affecting period of her



history, yet the minutest incidents are replete with the interesting characteristics of a noble but suffering spirit. Three months were allowed to elapse before her execution ; a delay granted, we are compelled to say, less from Elizabeth's pity than from the irresolution forced upon her conscience, to perpetrate that judicial assassination, which has ever been the stigma upon her reign. In an hour more fatal to her own fame and future peace than to the fortunes of her victim, she signed the warrant for Mary's death, and commissioned the earls of Kent and Shrewsbury to carry out its purport. Upon the 7th of February, 1587, these two noblemen arriving at Fotheringay Castle, informed the captive queen that the sentence, announced two months and a half before, by Lord Buckhurst, must now be fulfilled. Upon hearing this intelligence, " she made the sign of the cross : ' God be praised ! ' she said, ' for the news you bring me. I did not expect such a happy end after the treatment I have suffered, and the dangers to which I have been exposed for nineteen years, in this country.' With difficulty did she obtain even sufficient time for the writing out her will ; yet after spending most of the night in this occupation and in prayer, when she retired to rest, " it was evident that a sort of rapture spread over her countenance, and that she was addressing herself to Him



upon whom alone, her hopes now rested. At daybreak she arose, saying she had only two hours to live."

Upon the fatal morning of the 8th, "when they came downstairs, the queen, followed by Andrew Melvil, who bore the train of her gown, ascended the scaffold with the same ease and dignity as if she were ascending a throne. She seated herself without changing colour, and without losing any of her accustomed grace and majesty." After the sentence was read, she spoke: "My lords, I am a queen born,—a sovereign princess not subject to the laws, a near relation of the queen of England, and her lawful heiress. I thank God for permitting me to die in the presence of a company who will bear witness, that just before my death I protested, as I have always done, both in private and in public, that I never contrived any means of putting the queen to death, nor consented to anything against her person." Being harrassed by the ill-judged zeal of Fletcher, dean of Peterborough, and the rudeness of the earl of Kent, she discontinued communication with either, and betook herself to prayer for peace to the world, constancy to all suffering persecution, and for "grace and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, at this her last hour." She concluded with these words: "'Like as thy arms, Lord Jesus Christ, were stretched out upon the cross, even so receive me within the stretched-out arms of



thy mercy !' So fervid was her piety, so touching her effusions of feeling, so admirable her courage, that she drew tears from almost all who were present." Consistently with this spirit she prayed fervently for Queen Elizabeth.

The last moments were spent in consoling her maids, and distributing her blessing and her pardon ; then kneeling down, she bowed her neck to the executioner, exclaiming " My God ! I have hoped in thee—into thy hands I commit myself." As her head-dress was removed, her hair was discovered prematurely silvered by care and grief. The axe instead of falling on the neck, struck the back of her head and wounded her—yet she made no movement nor uttered a word of complaint. " Upon repeating the blow, the executioner struck off her head, and holding it up exclaimed, ' God save Queen Elizabeth !' to which Dr. Fletcher added, ' Thus may all her enemies perish.' ' Amen !' answered the earl of Kent alone ; every other eye was dimmed in tears, every other voice was stifled in commiseration."

An old cloth, torn hastily from a neighbouring billiard-table, was flung over the lifeless remains. All the relics which might be kept and venerated by the bystanders were carefully destroyed. Just as they were lifting the body to convey it to the state room of the castle, it was discovered that Mary's little



favourite dog had slipped in beneath her mantle, and was nestling in the bosom of his dead mistress ; force could alone remove the faithful animal, which was found dead on the following day.

It is a declaration of Holy Writ, that “ though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not go unpunished,” and indeed the very element of guilt bears about it the seeds of its own final discovery, punishment, and ruin. No matter how cunning the contrivance, how astute the perpetrator, how subtle the plot, how closely concealed the subterfuge, the vengeance follows the crime as surely as the peal the lightning-flash, or the shadow steps behind the figure ! It has been well remarked therefore, and we draw attention to the circumstance as one of the most instructive morals of this sad history, that all the connivers and perpetrators of Mary’s murder terminated their career in shame, distress, or violence. Elizabeth herself, whom we must consider as the principal, after becoming the victim of ingratitude from those whom her favours had unduly elevated, soured by reiterated proofs of the hollowness of sycophancy and the friendlessness to which a selfish sovereign is doomed, closed her life in a petulance and moroseness intolerable to herself as to her attendants, the sure proof of the mind within being “ so ill at ease” as to derive no comfort from the splendour of public acts or a nation’s greatness.



Moray was assassinated, under circumstances of the most crafty revenge, and fell, not for an injury committed by himself, but by one of his followers; Maitland poisoned himself; Bothwell became a pirate, then a prisoner, afterwards a maniac; Morton died on the scaffold. In a word, had the soft forgiveness so touchingly exemplified by Mary Stuart in her last hours been exchanged for vehement and passionate imprecation of ill, upon the heads of her enemies, or had her wishes so expressed, been fraught with unerring certainty in their fulfilment, she could not have foreshadowed a more fearful, nor have induced upon all a more comprehensive, punishment, than that brought upon the guilty, by their own acts, under the slow but certain arrangement of Him to whom "vengeance belongeth," and who has declared "He will repay."



## Madame de Maintenon.

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Born, 1635—Died, 1719.

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IMAGINE a dimly-lighted chamber, pierced by small casements grated with iron, a bare and comfortless floor, in a corner of which stands a low truckle bed, shaded by a faded curtain, hastily hung up to screen the occupant from the draught, penetrating through the ill-closed but strongly-barred door, and the wide cheerless-looking fireplace. Beside the bed, is sitting a man who, upon a second glance, ought not to give us the impression of age, he did when we first looked at him. It is probably confinement, and not time, which has paled his cheek, and mingled silver hairs with the dark locks shading an ample and well-defined forehead. Two children are playing in a corner of the room, and he stills their noisy gambols occasionally, with his uplifted finger. When he does this, they creep on tiptoe to his side, and peep stealthily at a pale cheek resting on the pillow, beside which another tiny face is nestling peace-



fully. Retiring satisfied, but with a certain air of wonder, they whisper softly together, and you may catch the words, "*Chère petite sœur*," and "*Ah ! le joli amour !*" more than once repeated.

The angel of Divine beneficence, who visits alike the palace and the hovel, shedding upon the coroneted head the dearer wreath of young maternity, and drying the tears of the peasant with the hopeful bliss these young harbingers of future support and comfort seldom fail to impart,—has brought a recent gift to cheer the lonely prison, with sunshine fresh from heaven. A few days only have those eyes, now so confidently closed upon her bosom, gladdened the mother's heart ; but none the less dear for that : the infant occupies as many of her cares as the other loved ones ; the gloomy auguries of its coming life-story, agitate as deeply her tender soul ; its welfare, temporal and spiritual, is already the subject of debate between herself and the other claimant, who shares with her the newly conferred treasure. But neither father nor mother dreams of the part, that baby form is destined to play, in the grand drama of life ; their eyes pierce not the future, with its chequered good and evil, nor can discern, so different in all its details to this where she has drawn her first breath, that chamber in which she shall resign her last sigh, surrounded by comfort and affluence—loved and respected,—the widow of a king !



Constans D'Aubigné holds religious views directly opposed to those of his wife ; they have just held a long and somewhat painful discussion in allusion to the subject, and the result is, that the priest's step is even now on the threshold, who is to baptize the infant, according to her mother's desire, a member of the Church of Rome. In conceding thus much, however, the father has no intention of permitting his children to be educated in any faith but his own, and we know not what schemes may be agitating his brain, relative to the means by which, he shall counterbalance the weight of the mother's influence over her offspring, and preserve them from the heretical taint no one dreads more deeply, than himself.

A short time after the birth of Frances D'Aubigné, the sister of her father, Madame de Villette, came to visit the prison. Everything was in the most sad and deplorable condition ; there was no prospect of liberation for the captive, no probability of an improvement in the fortunes of the unlappy little party. Her heart sunk at the sight of so much distress, and she determined upon adopting, for the present, her brother's children, if the consent of the mother were obtained. Madame D'Aubigné's scruples were overruled, and with many tears, she resigned her beloved little ones to their aunt's care, and remained alone, to share the imprisonment of her careless but unfortunate husband.



Her misgivings must have been potent, for Madame de Villette was not only a person calculated to attach the hearts of those committed to her care, but was, like her brother, a firm professor of Calvinism.

In the Château de Murçay was nurtured, for a considerable time, the young Frances, destined to advance through a path of misfortune and poverty, to the throne of France itself. But the anxious maternal heart of Jane D'Aubigné chafed at the separation, after a short time the child was reclaimed, and she parted with her aunt and little cousin, to take up her abode again within the walls of a prison,—this time the fortress of the Château Trompette. Here she had for a playmate, the little daughter of her father's gaoler; but thus early the child displayed that spirit of dignity and self-estimation which afterwards, properly developed, formed one of the main elements of her success. One day when they were together, her companion displayed to Frances a silver toy-set of tea-things, at the same time taunting "mademoiselle" with the circumstance of not being equally fortunate: "*You, pauvre enfant*, are not rich enough to buy such pretty things as these," said she. "That is true," was the reply of Frances; "but I am a young lady, and you are not."

After a considerable interval, Madame D'Aubigné succeeded in obtaining the release of her husband;



and the little family set sail for America, where they hoped to retrieve their fallen fortunes. Upon the voyage, they had nearly lost their little girl ; Frances was seized by a dangerous illness, grew rapidly worse, and at length fell back in her mother's arms in a trance, which was mistaken by those around her for death : thus for many hours she remained.

"Come, madam," said a sailor at length, seeing the poor lady still gazed with streaming eyes upon her treasure, "your child is dead, and the sight of it increases your despair. The only thing that remains is to consign it quietly to the sea."

"Alas ! let me press my darling once more in my arms," exclaimed Madame D'Aubigné, and the request was granted. As she did so with a last effort of hope, she placed her hand upon the little quiet bosom : "Oh !" she cried wildly, "my child still lives ; I feel her heart faintly palpitate !" And she was right ; her cares restored the all but departed life. Years after, when Madame de Maintenon was once relating the story at Marly, the bishop of Metz impressively rejoined, "Ah ! chère dame, it is for no small purpose when one returns from so far !"

The vessel, after considerable danger from pirates, landed its freight at Martinique, and here fortune for once, favoured the efforts of M. D'Aubigné, who amassed a considerable sum of money. Little, however, did it



profit him. Madame having returned to France to attend to some important business, he fell into his old habits of play, and gambled away the entire prospects of his family. When she hurried back, as it would seem, fearful to leave for long a person whose resolutions constantly required the aid of her firmer principle, she found him ruined, and pining in a state of hopeless sickness.

A fire which destroyed their abode augmented the misfortunes of the little household. Frances was observed by her mother, who bore reverses with perfect patience, bathed in tears. "What ! weep for the loss of a house !" said the latter, surprised at such an unusual trait upon the child's part. "Just as if I were crying about the house," was the reply ; "it is my doll that I am crying about." Notwithstanding this somewhat abrupt retort, Madame D'Aubigné, who educated her children herself, brought them up to be dutiful and amiable, as well as intelligent companions. She bestowed especial pains upon Frances, whose superior talents and congeniality of disposition with her own, rendered her the favourite of her parent. She delighted in recounting to her, histories of the distinguished talents of her grandfather, Theodore Agrippa D'Aubigné, who had served Henry IV. of Navarre with zeal and courage, and left a notable renown as a firm supporter, by his writings and con-



duct, of the tenets of the Reformation. "And shall *I* be nothing?" was the exclamation of the child on one of these occasions. "What would you be, my dear?" replied her mother. "I would be queen of Navarre," was the reply. A strange idea, bearing almost the appearance of a prediction.

Upon the death of D'Aubigné, the widow was compelled to raise funds to carry her back to France, to implore the aid of her friends, leaving the little Frances, at the time only seven years old, as a sort of hostage in the hands of her creditors. After being sent from place to place, the judge of Martinique benevolently received her into his house, and sent her by the first favourable opportunity to rejoin her mother. On arriving, her kinswoman, Madame de Montalembert, was solicited to receive her, but refusing, Madame de Villette, her aunt, and first friend, again took her under her protection, and did her best to restore in the child's mind those Protestant principles, which her residence with her mother had almost extinguished. Frances under her care professed at least, if she did not fully concur in, the religion of her ancestors.

Becoming aware of this circumstance, Madame D'Aubigné, a sincere Romanist, decided upon reclaiming her daughter from the hands of one she considered a heretic; but the aunt refused to admit her claim,



urging that she was not in a position to support Frances; nor until Madame de Neuillant, another relative, obtained an order from the queen-mother for her restoration, did she reluctantly consent to relinquish her beloved charge.

Poor Frances now experienced very different treatment. She was made to reside with Madame de Neuillant, a harsh and bigoted woman, who, finding arguments and entreaties unavailing to pervert her young guest, resorted to every severe method to subdue her spirit, and carry the desired point. Forced to share the kitchen with the domestics, and assist them in their labours, Frances, supplied with a mask lest the sun should ruin her beautiful complexion, might be seen every morning, basket in hand like the poor princess in the fairy-tale, going out to watch the turkeys: with strict injunctions not to touch the breakfast she carried in her basket, until a certain portion of sacred poetry, particularly papistical in sentiment, was committed to memory. "I commanded in the poultry-yard," she afterwards laughingly remarked; "and it was with this moderate scope of government, my reign commenced." No means, however stringent, sufficed to win over Frances at this period of her life, so that, tired of the task, and determined no longer to waste money upon the "little heretic," her persecutor at length gave up the endea-



vous in disgust, and contented herself with stipulating that, on leaving her, Frances should be committed to the care of the Ursulines of Niort, Madame de Villette undertaking to furnish the necessary means, for defraying her conventual expenses.

New importunities, planned after a different and far more dangerous fashion, now assailed the youthful Calvinist, nor were her principles proof against their insidious effect. With childish earnestness she made a compromise, as she considered, in permitting herself to be ranked again a member of the Catholic Church. "I will agree to admit all you wish" she said, "provided you will not insist on my believing that my aunt Villette will be lost for her heresy in the next world—she who lives like a saint in this. I intend to exact the same understanding about several other of my relatives and friends, who are of the other religion."

And so, as she was considered to be restored to the bosom of the true Church, Madame de Neuillant condescended to receive her to hers; and this time Frances found that asylum rather less frigid, and was gratified by the admission of her intelligent little person, into some of the society which her patroness frequented, whither the pair were borne in a sedan chair carried by two mules, upon one of which the younger lady was occasionally permitted to ride. But, never-



theless, considerable tyranny was exercised in private over the poor girl, an orphan now, for the hapless Madame D'Aubigné, after supporting herself for a period by the work of her own hands, had terminated by death her deprivations and calamities. In public she was treated with affection and consideration, for her understanding, as well as her beauty, was everywhere the subject of remark, and the "fair Indian," as she was termed, displayed powers which attracted credit to, and reflected lustre upon, her *chaperone*.

At this period Mdlle. D'Aubigné made the acquaintance of the Abbé Scarron, at whose house she met many of the celebrated wits of the day; all more or less charmed with her *esprit* and attraction. Scarron himself, though paralytic, and deformed in figure, was remarkable for his liveliness, and inexhaustible sense of humour. He became soon attached to his young visitor, and upon the death of her mother, viewing with commiseration the state of dependence to which she was reduced, and becoming aware of the harshness of her relative, he determined either to offer her a provision which should enable her to take the veil, or to relinquish his canonry (a preferment not to be held by other than a bachelor), for the purpose of making her his wife. Although, even at this time excessively devout, it seemed that the incli-



nations of the young lady were so far in favour of the world, that she hesitated but little in making choice of the latter alternative ; and Scarron, who nevertheless could very ill spare the yearly revenue of 2,000 *livres* belonging to his canonry, cheerfully, if not joyfully, married her in the April of 1651, when she was between sixteen and seventeen years old. " At this time" (Madame de Maintenon writes in her letters), " M. Scarron had not a free movement, except those of his hands, his tongue, and his eyes." On drawing up the contract, the bridegroom acknowledged, for the lady's sole dower, an annuity of four *louis-d'ors*, adding, with vivacity, " two large expressive eyes, a most elegant figure, a pair of beautiful hands, and a vast deal of wit." " And what will you settle upon Mademoiselle ?" asked the notary. " Immortality," replied the presumptuous poet ; " the names of the wives of kings die with them ; the name of the wife of Scarron will live always." This prospective immortality, notwithstanding, went a very little way in defraying the expenses of the new-married pair, whose tastes were as lavish as their purses were scantily lined. Madame Scarron had often to preside at table when there was a greater display of *pièces de porcelaine* than of *résistance*. How she supplied the deficiency may be gathered from the following "*aside*," whispered one day by her servants,—"*Prez madam, give these gen-*



tlemen one more story,—there is no roast meat to-day.” Not only did Frances amuse her husband’s guests, but she devoted all her leisure time to diverting himself ; she was the unwearying nurse of her “poor paralytic”—as she termed him ; his amanuensis, his reader, and ever intelligent friend. In return he instructed her in composition, and under his superintendence, she acquired the Latin, Spanish, and Italian languages.

Frances, now become religious from conviction, won over her careless and infidel husband to a participation in her own religious exercises. On his death-bed he was led, by her example, to confess the errors of his past life, and express sincere repentance for them. He died, bequeathing her nothing but, as he said, “the liberty of marrying again,” for which permission Madame Scarron, who had at the time, no desire to re-enter the marriage state, scarcely thanked him. He had raised her from indigence, she now fell back into a similar state ; his jokes and his debts were all that remained to her of her friend and husband. Nevertheless the young widow bewailed him with a profusion of tears, and marked her regret by refusing even the offer of a duke’s hand, which, amongst many others, she shortly after received.

The friends of Frances, on the death of Scarron, urged her to apply to the king (Louis XIV.) for a continuance of the pension he had enjoyed. She



consented reluctantly, and several successive petitions reached the royal observation, generally commencing with the words, "The widow Scarron most humbly entreats your Majesty." Louis got tired of these applications, deigning to take no favourable notice of them, and exclaimed in a pet one day, "Good gracious! when shall I cease to hear of the widow Scarron?" The words were repeated among the courtiers, and for some time after, whenever any one was particularly importunate, it was usual to speak of them as being "as troublesome as Madame Scarron."

But Frances gave herself little concern about the matter. She was anything but mercenary,—temperate and economical, though fond of society; and so careless about the pleasures of appetite, that she constantly went through the whole of Lent at the head of her husband's table, "eating only a herring, after which she immediately retired to her own apartment." She managed, with some trifling assistance from the queen-mother, to live in the plainest manner, wearing only the cheapest clothes, yet contriving to set aside a portion of her slender pittance for charitable purposes. But her royal patroness dying, she was compelled to take refuge among the Ursulines, whom she had known in her youth. Not long after, an offer was made to her, to form one in the Princess de Nemours' suite, who had become queen of Portugal, and she had nearly



accepted it, when Madame de Montespan, the favourite of Louis XIV., then in the zenith of her ascendancy, undertook the case of her old friend, and once more presented the neglected petition to the king. On casting his eyes over it, Louis exclaimed, surprised, "What! the widow Scarron again?" "Even so, sire," was the reply; "it is very true that you ought long since to have heard the last of her, and very surprising, that your Majesty has not yet listened to the petition of a woman, whose ancestors were ruined in the service of yours!" This plain speaking had the desired effect: Madame Scarron was preserved from the exile she meditated, and placed for the future above the condition of dependence.

It was, however, with considerable reluctance that she saw herself, shortly after, installed governess to the children of her friend, and only to please Madame de Montespan did she consent to what, she rightly considered, would prove a most laborious and unthankful task. The little ones, charmed by her gentle care, soon began to love their governess better than their mother, who was constantly leaving them alone, and by her passionate temper estranged most of her friends and relatives. Once, the king surprised Madame Scarron in the midst of all the anxieties of her office. The little Duc de Maine, the eldest of her young charges, was ill of a fever, and the governess



was seated beside his bed, holding his hand in hers, while another little one peacefully reposed in her arms, and her foot rocked the cradle containing a third. The king was inexpressibly touched by this scene, and is said to have upon this occasion discovered, for the first time, upon looking at Madame Scarron (who, after three or four sleepless nights spent beside the couch of the sick child, was looking unusually pale and ill), that "she had the finest eyes in the world." Louis had hitherto disliked the widow, and set her down as pedantic and austere, but this little revelation, contrasted with the appearance of the mother, radiant as she just peeped in, to make a casual inquiry after her sick child, interested him excessively in a person who was capable of evidencing so much self-denial, without a murmur or desire for praise. Her pension was from this day increased, and her position rendered still more important.

To these children, and particularly to the eldest, the governess became daily more attached ; but the capriciousness of Madame de Montespan rendered her life so extremely wretched, that even her affection could not prevent her from declaring her determination of separating herself from them, and only the commands of the king detained her. She obtained a short respite for a journey into Flanders, whither she accompanied her eldest pupil, who was



endeavouring to obtain a cure for lameness, and on her return, the king, to mark his sense of her estimable qualities, made her a present of the estate of Maintenon, the name of which—despite the slighting pun it entailed, of “Madame de *Maintenant*,” in allusion to her rapid rise—she immediately assumed, instead of that of D’Aubigné, by which she had usually signed herself. Two successive journeys followed, with the same object ; during one of them, she made up her quarrel with her aunt Villette, and paid a loving visit to the old Ursulines in the convent at Niort.

Madame de Maintenon had now arrived at her fortieth year, but she had lost few of the graces of her youth. Her manners were reserved, a lesson she is said to have derived from her mother, “who never embraced her more than twice in her life ;” her appearance was very commanding, and a peculiar kind of manner gave her an easy and certainly not unpleasant air of influence, over most of those she addressed. Once her confessor complained to her that her dress was too costly, too refined. “That is impossible,” was her reply ; “examine this material, it is of the commonest description ; I wear no muslin, no gauze, only a few black ribbons.” “You are right,” returned the priest ; “and yet, I know not why, whenever you kneel before me, I see a profusion of elegant dress fall with you at my feet, which appears so graceful that I



I cannot help thinking it in some manner gay." Her conversation was brilliant, and the king, who loved to be amused, soon accustomed himself to look for almost daily refreshment in her society. A favourite with the queen also, she is said to have constantly excited the jealousy of the other court ladies, who envied her influence, but still more its attestation by the portrait of herself, magnificently set with diamonds, from the consort of Louis. On her death-bed, the queen took from her finger a ring, which she gave, with many expressions of esteem, to one whom she little thought was destined to prove her successor.

After this event, Madame de Maintenon, who was in the suite of the dauphiness, accompanied the court to Fontainebleau, and here was still more thrown into the society of the sovereign. He constantly consulted her upon matters of difficulty, and although she gave advice reluctantly, she did so, with few exceptions, to the king's advantage and honour. There is little doubt that she was ambitious, and even at this period had formed serious designs upon the heart of Louis ; but other matters occupied her attention nearly as much as did this project, nor was she unmindful of the task of proselytizing her niece (afterwards Madame de Caylus), who, somewhat unjustifiably, she carried off, in the absence of her father, in order to convert her to Popery. Charity was at once her



recreation and reward : she founded, about this time, an institution at Versailles, and later, one at St. Cyr, for young ladies of good birth, but possessing no property, whom she educated and dowered. Deeply beloved by this her family, with it, to quote the words of Anquetil, "she found what is seldom to be met with in the palaces of kings,—innocence, candour, and gratitude,—which even years after her death, were still ready to strew flowers on her tomb."

It is believed that the marriage of Madame de Maintenon with the king, took place upon the return of the court from Fontainebleau. There were but few witnesses of it, but they could scarcely oppose the wishes of their sovereign, when the woman of his choice possessed still so many charms ; her brilliant complexion, varying with every changeful expression of her lips ; her piercing dark eyes ; and a wit which, even less than her beauty, had suffered by the ravages of time. Nor was the new queen humbly born ; the heralds traced back, with justice, her family seventeen generations, to Geoffry d'Aubigné, who was a knight as early as 1160. Yet two years were passed by her in deliberation, and when she consented, and the marriage took place, it is remarkable that no written document attesting it, if such ever existed, was to be found when searched for. Just before the appointed day, it is related, that as she was sitting for the last time for



her portrait, the painter remarked that a mantle of ermine would throw out the figure, draped after the manner of Madame's patroness, Saint Frances. On hearing this, the king significantly desired that the mantle might be brought,—thus identifying her with other crowned heads, alone privileged to assume this insignia of royalty. Smilingly he insisted upon throwing it over her shoulders, remarking as he did so, "She deserves it ;" words afterwards remembered. It was noticed, too, that after the celebration of mass upon the day of the suspected nuptials, Madame de Maintenon walked first into the chapel, and that the king himself unfastened the door of the seat appropriated to the queen, which, since the death of his consort, had remained unoccupied, and installed her there,—a position she ever afterwards retained. It is said, Louis, more than once, offered to acknowledge his marriage publicly, but was prevented as much by Madame de Maintenon as by his ministers, who went the most extravagant lengths to deter him from what, they deemed, a most impolitic confession. It was, however, generally suspected, and in many cases actually known, so that even the superior of the convent of the Grand Carmelites (a sanctuary queens only were privileged to enter), hesitated not to admit her when she desired it. It was on this occasion, that an indirect confession of her rank



escaped her. "You know our rules, Madame," said the superior, "and can best decide whether I ought to open the gate." "Open, good mother," replied she; "you may always admit *me*."

The king insisted that she should be present during state debates, and would constantly appeal to her as she sat at work, with "What says your gravity?" Yet, despite the confidence of her royal spouse, and the possession of the coveted dignity so many had vainly aspired to, Frances de Maintenon was not happy. Her only pleasant hours seem to have been passed at St. Cyr. For the young ladies of this institution, the poet Racine, at the request of their patroness, composed the "Esther" and the "Athalia," pieces which they performed there. In the first of these dramas, it was thought, Madame found an application flattering to her self-love; the triumph she had achieved over the minister Louvois, her enemy, and the favourite, Madame de Montespan, being depicted in that of Esther over her rival Vashti, and the wicked Haman. But in connexion with the author, justice obliges us to record an anecdote less favourable than usual to the clandestinely-wedded queen. The king, once talking with Racine upon the respective merits of tragedy and comedy, inquired of the latter how it was that dramatic representation, formerly almost perfect, was now sunk so low. Among other reasons, the poet



urged the want of good authors. "On account of the rarity of first-rate pieces," he said, "actors are obliged to re-produce old ones, and among others, *those wretched productions of Scarron !*" The widow, who had overheard this little piece of forgetfulness, reddened as the unfortunate words reached her, while the king anxiously glanced at her, and observing she had heard them, became confused and silent. Racine, suddenly aroused to the discovery of his absence of mind, "dared neither look nor speak." From that day both Louis and Madame de Maintenon refused to honour him with the smallest notice, and he is said, overwhelmed by the unhappy termination of his hopes of preferment, to have languished, and fallen into a state of melancholy which ultimately killed him.

If this single incident places in no pleasing aspect, the character of our heroine, numerous others exist to prove it altogether as estimable and generous. Devotedly attached to her pupils, she spared no amount of self-denial to improve their dispositions or their interests. The attachment of all for her was filial, but amongst them, perhaps, her heart was most warmly inclined to the Duc de Maine, whose lameness, her endeavours had the sole credit of removing, and Adelaide, of Savoy, afterwards duchess of Burgundy, and ultimately dauphiness. This promising young princess died suddenly, and was followed by her



husband, who had taken the infection of her disorder, it was said, though others suspected poison in both cases. Madame de Maintenon had pleased herself by assuming with this beloved and engaging girl, the relation of Minerva and Telemachus, in her friend Fénelon's book, and when her favourite sank into an untimely grave, her regrets were almost beyond her strength to sustain. Little more than three years afterwards, a still deeper grief assailed her heart, to which it would appear the king had been inexpressibly dear; Louis XIV., who, with all his faults, possessed several popular and amiable qualities, died on the first day of September, in the year 1715, lamented by a large proportion of the French nation. His beloved Frances was, for a considerable period antecedent, hidden from his eyes, Louis was no longer sensible of her presence, nor moved by her endearments. On reaching St. Cyr, whither she hastily retired after his death, she is said to have exclaimed, "My grief is calm though great :—I have now none but God, and these my dear children;" and, melting into tears, she regarded the crowd of sympathizing girls her bounty had protected, with the gaze of a widowed mother.

From this time she never left her beloved residence. In the middle of the year 1717, Peter the Great, of Russia, visited St. Cyr, and expressing his desire to



behold its foundress, a woman so remarkable and attractive, was introduced to her as she lay feeble and failing in her bed. She gives herself an account of the interview. "Sitting down at my bedside," she says, "the Czar asked me if I were sick? I told him I was. He then inquired what was my complaint? I replied, extreme old age. He made no answer, and appeared not to comprehend. His visit was short. He caused them to open the curtains at the foot of my bed, that he might see me." La Beaumelle adds to this account, "that she blushed, and it was remarked by the ladies of St. Cyr, that she even still appeared beautiful."

She survived until the following April, and gradually sunk, without pain or anxiety, into the arms of death, in her estimation a cradling and tender protector. Some grief reached her declining hours, through the misfortune of the Duc de Maine. "In all my life," she said, "I have never felt any pleasure so lively as the pain which I now suffer for the troubles of others: I have done well, I now see, in not seeking to elevate myself to a condition of enviable splendour."

No provision of any kind was made by Louis XIV. for his wife, and though the regent honourably supplied the omission, she would receive only an annual income of six hundred pounds. Yet her school at Noisy, and at St. Cyr, were, by no means, the only



benevolent establishments she founded ; at **Maintenon** her manufactory of lace and linen gave employment to hundreds of otherwise idle hands, and taught the poor, under the superintendence of artisans from **Normandy**, and even **Flanders**, a means of supporting their families. No wonder that her name was universally beloved, nor that **Louis** adored (says **Madame de Genlis**) “ a woman so superior to the rest of her sex,—a woman who, deprived during thirty-five years of all the gifts of fortune, had alternated between misery and opulence, obscurity and the summit of favour, without having exemplified an instant’s intoxication, without losing any portion of her modesty and simplicity,—a woman who showed, in every trust committed to her, boundless zeal and devotion, and who conducted herself properly in every relation, whether of relative or friend,—a woman, in a word, bestowing upon the unfortunate three parts of her income, and who, notwithstanding this noble passion, satisfied to sacrifice herself wholly for the poor, invariably displayed fear or contempt for the wealth she never acquired.”



## Marie Antoinette.

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Born 1755—Died 1793.

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IN a chamber of the imperial residence at Vienna, one sultry September evening, in the year 1767, two young sisters, locked in a fast embrace, poured out upon each other's bosom, torrents of melancholy tears. A sad, an unnatural, sight, to behold these children—for they were scarcely more—testifying such overpowering emotion; but far sadder when, upon looking around, it became apparent, from the profusion of bridal attire scattered here and there, that the elder of them was upon the eve of the most important event of her life, her marriage! She was a beautiful slender girl of fifteen, with the delicate complexion and abundant golden ringlets bespeaking her Austrian birth, and her countenance characterized by a gentle benevolence justly indicating a disposition which rendered her an universal favourite. But very unlike a bride looked she now, her lips tightly compressed, her face pale as a lily, and



her beautiful eyes dimmed with tears, while her youngest and best-beloved sister, scarcely comprehending the motive for a grief she could not see unmoved, lay in the arms of her companion, joining to hers, childish lamentations yet more violent, though less expressive.

They were two of the younger children of the Empress Maria Theresa : Josepha, the young queen of Naples, and Marie Antoinette, afterwards wife of the unhappy Louis XVI. of France.

Gently disengaging herself after some moments thus spent, and with a strong effort controlling her grief, Josepha at length rose, and folding a mantle across her bosom, prepared with a perceptible shudder to leave the apartment.

"I must go, my sister," she said, in mournful accents ; "the evening advances, and our mother's commands are not to be disobeyed."

"Alas ! Josepha, have you informed her of your dread of this visit ? So weak as you are, so suffering as you have been, it cannot be right for you to risk the cold of that horrible vault—let me go to the empress, let me implore"——

"Hush, my darling, that is impossible. Ever since these nuptials were first talked of, I have felt the same terrible disinclination and horror ; the fate of Joanna, our sister, seems constantly present, warning me not to



proceed. But my grief at being separated from all I love, has been unheeded. Like her I am affianced to Ferdinand, like her I shall never ascend the Neapolitan throne; I shall die, Antoinette,—die before the crown touches my brows!”

The tears of the younger sister began to flow afresh. “If our father had been alive,” she said, “this marriage might have been prevented. Oh! how indulgent, how kind, he was to us. I shall never forget his parting from me, before he set out for Inspruck, upon that fatal journey. He sent for me after he had already said adieu, and left the palace, and when I came, he pressed me to his heart, again and again, saying—‘*J’avais besoin d’embrasser encore cette enfant!*’ We never saw him after! Ah! I was his favourite: had he lived, he would not have refused his little Antoinette anything!”

“And now I am about to visit his tomb. I have heard that years ago, when our mother was little more than a bride, like I am now (she shivered as she spoke), she caused that vault to be constructed beneath the Church of the Capuchins, to receive him, herself, and their family, and ever since his death she has gone, on the 18th day of every month, to pour out her soul in prayer, near his remains. Already several members of our house have been successively deposited there:—I shall be the next.”



“ Alas ! Josepha ! ”

“ Yes ! Antoinette, I have implored to be spared this proof of filial love ; my courage is unequal to the task, and I would fain set out for Naples without re-entering that gloomy place where, three short months ago, our brother's wife was interred. Contagion may lurk around her remains, the disorder which caused her death, may seize me. But all this the empress knows, and is inflexible : hark ! there are the attendants, they come to fetch me. My death-warrant is signed ; I leave you for ever, not for Naples, but for the tomb of my ancestors—there to remain.”

Her voice was broken by sobs ; scarcely less affected, the eyes of the little Antoinette, blinded by tears, followed the receding form of her sister. The door closed upon the thin white figure, which already looked like a denizen of the grave ! When Antoinette again saw her sister, she felt the presentiment had been a prediction. The young queen had been seized with shivering fits, and deadly faintness, at the tomb of her father ; the vicinity of the coffin containing the body of the archduchess had infected the living victim with the horrors of the small-pox, and within a few days Josepha had ceased to live.

This incident made an indelible impression upon the mind of Marie Antoinette, and the self-reproaches of her mother still further augmented it. The next



sister to Josepha, Caroline, eventually ascended the Neapolitan throne, and the authority of Maria Theresa was still exercised in favour of an alliance with that country.

The empress was not highly educated: she was incapable of directing the studies of her children, although by precept and example she laid the foundation of characters, all of which became more or less remarkable. Marie Antoinette her youngest child, was perhaps the most neglected. She once innocently caused the dismissal of her governess, through a confession that all the letters and drawings shown to her mother, in proof of her improvement, had been previously traced with a pencil. At fifteen her knowledge of Italian, studied under Metastasio, was the only branch of her education which had been fairly attended to, if we except considerable conversance with the "Lives of the Saints," and other legendary lore, the favourite fictions of monastic compilers. Nature had, nevertheless, done much for the young archduchess; she possessed great facility of learning, and was not slow in taking advantage of opportunities for improvement, when they were afforded: in person she was most attractive. "Beaming with freshness" (says Madame Campan), "she appeared to all eyes more than beautiful. Her walk partook at once of the noble character of the princesses of her house, and of the graces of the



French ; her eyes were mild, her smile lovely. It was impossible to refrain from admiring her ærial deportment : her smile was sufficient to win the heart ; and in this enchanting being, in whom the splendour of French gaiety shone forth,—an indescribable but august serenity,—perhaps, also, the somewhat proud position of her head and shoulders, betrayed the daughter of the Cæsars.” Such, according to her affectionate chronicler, appeared Marie Antoinette, when her nuptials were celebrated at Versailles with the Dauphin of France.

Superstitious minds discovered fatal omens from the earliest years of the hapless dauphiness. She had begun ill by first drawing breath upon the very day of the Earthquake of Lisbon : this made a great impression on the mother, and later upon the child also. Another incident was not less discouraging : the empress had “protected a person named Gassner,” who fancied himself inspired, and affected to predict events,—“Tell me,” she said to him one day, “whether my Antoinette will be happy?” At first, Gassner turned pale, and remained silent, but urged by the empress, and dreading to distress her by his own fancies, he said equivocally, “Madame, there are crosses for all shoulders.” Goëthe notices that a pavilion erected to receive Marie Antoinette and her suite in the neighbourhood of Strasburg, was lined with



tapestry depicting the story of Jason, "the most fatal union" on record ; and a few days later, when the young queen arrived from Versailles to witness the rejoicings of the people upon her marriage, she was compelled to fly, terrified, from a scene remarkable, not for festivity and happiness, but for the variety and horror of its accidents. These circumstances threw a gloom over the prospective triumphs of the impressionable bride ; but her nature and age were alike favourable to vivacity, and she shook off the morbid influence.

The grand annoyance Marie Antoinette experienced upon her entrance into the French court, was the necessity of observing a system of etiquette to which she had been unaccustomed, and soon pronounced, with girlish vehemence, insupportable. Barrière copies a ridiculous anecdote, in illustration of this, from the MS. fragments of Madame Campan. "Madame de Noailles" (this was the first lady of honour to the dauphiness) "abounded in virtues ; I cannot pretend to deny it. Her piety, charity, and irreproachable morals rendered her worthy of praise, but etiquette was to her a sort of atmosphere : at the slightest derangement of the consecrated order, one would have thought she would have been stifled, and that life would forsake her frame. One day I unintentionally threw this poor lady into a terrible agony : the queen was receiving, I know not



whom—some persons just presented, I believe ; the lady of honour, the queen's tire-woman, and the ladies of the bedchamber were behind the queen. I was near the throne with the two women on duty. All was right ; at least, I thought so. Suddenly I perceived the eyes of Madame de Noailles fixed on mine. She made a sign with her head, and then raised her eyebrows to the top of her forehead, lowered them, raised them again, then began to make little signs with her hand. From all this pantomime, I could easily perceive that something was not as it should be, and as I looked about on all sides to find out what it was, the agitation of the countess kept increasing. The queen, who perceived all this, looked at me with a smile. I found means to approach her majesty, who said to me in a whisper, '*Let down your lappets, or the countess will expire.*' All this bustle arose from two unlucky pins, which fastened up my lappets, whilst the etiquette of costume said, '*Lappets hanging down.*'"

To the Countess de Noailles, Marie Antoinette speedily gave the name of Madame l'Etiquette ; this pleasantry the object of it could pardon, not so the French nation. The avowed dislike to ceremony manifested by the lively little dauphiness, her desire to substitute the simple manners of her native Vienna for the stately formality of Versailles, displeased more



than her genuine condescension and affability attracted. Early also in her married life, to beguile the heavy tedium of their evenings, she instituted a variety of childish games which became talked of and condemned : she liked theatrical representations, and persuaded her two young brothers-in-law, with the princesses, to join her in performing plays, and though they were kept secret for a time, she suffered for her innocent contrivances, in public opinion. It must be remembered that Marie Antoinette had no sincere friends, upon her arrival in France, except the Duc de Choiseul and his party, and his disgrace prevented her deriving much benefit from the man who had first negotiated her marriage. The house of Austria was looked upon with dislike and doubt : nor were these, even in the case of the young dauphin's aunt, Madame Adelaide, made a matter of concealment. Thus at her entrance upon public life, Antoinette was met with cynicism and prejudice, and unfortunately her own conduct rather increased than quieted the insidious voice—the "*bruit sourd*"—of both.

Louis XV. had testified, from the first, great pleasure in the society of his grandson's bride. After dining in his apartment at the Tuileries, upon her arrival at Paris, she was obliged to acknowledge the shouts of the multitude, which filled the garden below, by presenting herself on the balcony.



The governor of Paris had told her politely at the time, that "these were so many lovers." Little did she think, at the very moment, that a strong party around her was planning her divorce, under the supposition that the dauphin's coldness to his bride proceeded from dislike. Louis was a timid, though rough youth at the time, and for a considerable period treated the attractions, which the courtiers so highly extolled, with churlish indifference. The French king, indeed, did his best to promote a better understanding, and when the reserve of the dauphin once thawed, the latter became tenderly attached to her, and greatly improved by her influence and society.

An interesting trait of this youthful pair is told, as occurring at the moment when they might have been excused for entertaining other, and more selfish thoughts. They were expecting the intelligence of the death of Louis XV. It had been agreed, as the disorder was one frightfully contagious, that the court should depart immediately upon learning it could be of no further assistance, and that a lighted taper, placed in the window of the dying monarch's chamber, should form a signal for the cavalcade to prepare for the journey. The taper was extinguished; a tumult of voices and advancing feet was heard in the outer apartment: "it was the crowd of courtiers deserting the dead sovereign's anti-chamber, to come and bow to



the new power of Louis XVI." With a spontaneous impulse the dauphin and his bride threw themselves upon their knees, and shedding a torrent of tears, exclaimed, "O God ! guide us, protect us ; we are too young to govern !" Thus the Countess de Noailles found them as she entered, the first to salute Marie Antoinette as Queen of France.

For some time the young queen's liking for children was ungratified by the possession of any of her own, and this gave rise to an amusing attempt to adopt one belonging to others. One day when she was driving near Luciennes, a little peasant boy fell under the horses' feet, and might have been killed. The queen took him to Versailles, appointed him a nurse, and installed him in the royal apartments, constantly seating him in her lap, at breakfast and dinner. This child afterwards grew up a most sanguinary revolutionist ! It was nine years before Marie Antoinette had the blessing of any offspring : four children were, after that interval, born to her, two of whom died in their infancy, and two survived to share their parent's subsequent imprisonment. The sad history of her son's fate, a promising and attractive boy, is well known.

We have seen the Austrian princess was no favourite with her husband's nation. After a time accusations as unjust as serious, assailed her, and in the horrors



of the succeeding revolution, the popular feeling evinced itself in a hundred frightful ways. Louis XVI. a mild prince, averse from violence or bloodshed, was unfit to stem the tide of opposition: had he possessed the energy of his queen, the Reign of Terror had perhaps never existed. Throughout her misfortunes, in every scene of flight, of opprobrium, and desolation, her magnanimity and courage won, even from the ruffians around, occasional expressions of sympathy. A harrowing and melancholy history is her's, and one which has been often vividly narrated, its details, also, are sufficiently recent to be still fresh within the recollection of many. For these reasons, and further because it seems to us a repellent, if not a mischievous act, to amplify such records, before advancing age shall have invested them to the mind with deeper significance, we gladly pass over the picture suggested by this dark historical page, and resuming the narrative where Madame de Campan drops it, content ourselves with a description of the last scene in the terrible drama.

When this devoted woman left her royal mistress in the miserable cell at the convent of the Feuillans, she never again saw her. Imprisonment, and the intense grief she experienced, more for others than for herself, completely transformed the once beautiful queen; her hair was prematurely silvered, like that of Mary



Stuart, her figure bowed, her voice low and tremulous. Then came the separation from the king. Once more only did her eyes again behold him, and after the parting between the dethroned monarch and his adoring family, he might indeed have been able to say, "the bitterness of death was passed." However weak at intervals, the unhappy Louis met his death heroically. The sufferings of his wife at the time when the guns boomed out the fearful catastrophe, may be supposed to have been as great as the human frame has power to endure. Shortly after, she was separated from her children, and conveyed to the prison of the Conciergerie, a damp and loathsome place, whence she was summoned, one morning in October, to receive a sentence for which it is probable she ardently longed. Let us look at her through the bars of her prison, upon her return thither, after it was pronounced.

It is four o'clock in the morning. The widowed queen of France stands calm and resigned in her cell, listening with a melancholy smile to the tumult of the mob outside. A faint illumination announces the approach of day ;—it is the last she has to live ! Seating herself at a table, she writes with hurried hand a last letter of ardent tenderness to the sister of her husband, the pious Madame Elizabeth, and to her children ; and now she passionately presses the insensible paper to her lips, as the sole remaining link



between those dear ones and **herself**. She stops, sighs, and throws herself upon her miserable pallet. What ! in such an hour as this, can the queen sleep ! Even so !

And now look up, daughter of the Cæsars ! Thou art waked from dreams of hope and light, from the imaged embrace of thy beloved Louis, thy tender infants, by a kind voice, choked by tears. Arise ! emancipated one, thy prison doors are open ! Freedom, freedom is at hand !

Immediately in front of the **palace of the Tuileries**—scene of the short months of her wedded happiness—there rises a dark, ominous mass. Around is a sea of human faces ; above, the cold frown of a winter's sky. With a firm step, the victim ascends the stairs of the scaffold, her white garments wave in the chill breeze, a black ribbon by which her **cap** is confined, beats to and fro against her pale cheeks. You may see that she is unmindful of her executioners,—she glances, nay almost smiles, at the sharp edge of the guillotine, and then turning **her eyes** towards the Temple, utters, in a few agitated words, her last earthly farewell, to Louis and her children. There is a hush—a stillness of the grave—for the very headsman trembles as the horrible blade falls—anon, a moment's delay. And now, look ! No ! rather veil your eyes from the dreadful sight ; close your ears from that fiendish



shout—*Vive la République !* It is over ! the sacrifice is accomplished ! the weary spirit is at rest !

\* \* \* \* \*

Close we the procession of our Heroines with so fair and noble a victim, dwelling upon this last mournful pageant only sufficiently far, as to imitate the virtues, and emulate the firmness and resignation with which she met her doom. Nothing is permitted without a meaning, all is for either warning or example ; and while breathing a prayer, that Heaven may avert a recurrence of such outrages, let us remember that moral indecision, the undue love of pleasure, and an aimless, profitless mode of life, as surely and not less fatally, may raise the surging tide of events no human skill can quell, as the most selfish abandonment to uncontrolled desires.

So shall the impulsive Marie Antoinette, and her gentle, peace-loving husband, not have lived, not have died, in vain : so shall healing virtue emanate from those tears of blood the last century drew from hundreds of victims, alternately oppressing and oppressed ; so shall not be lost to succeeding ages, this signal and melancholy moral, of a monarch's weakness,—a queen's thoughtlessness,—a people's passion !



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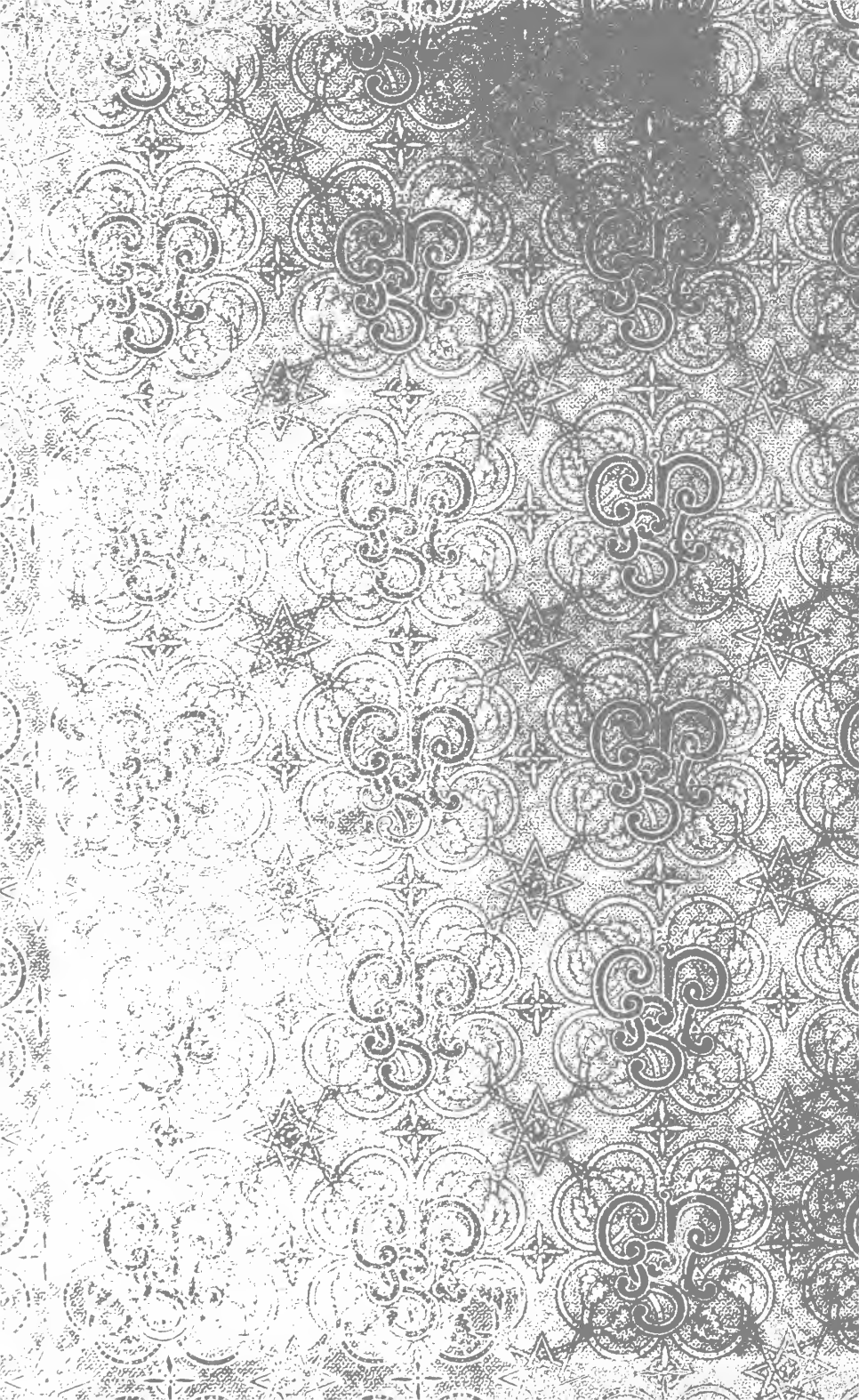
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